

INTO THE WIND

BOOKS BY
GERTRUDE E. MALLETT

Into the Wind

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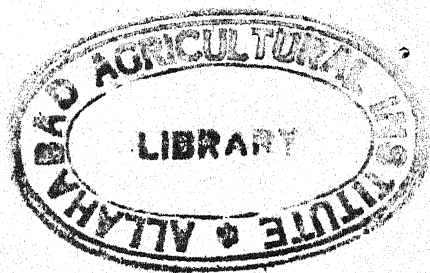
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Gertrude E. Mallette

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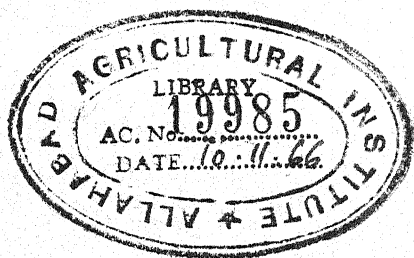


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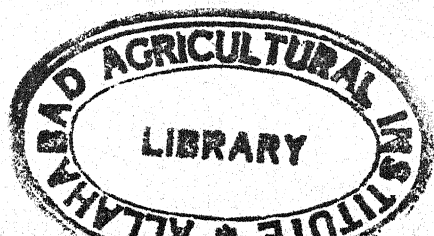
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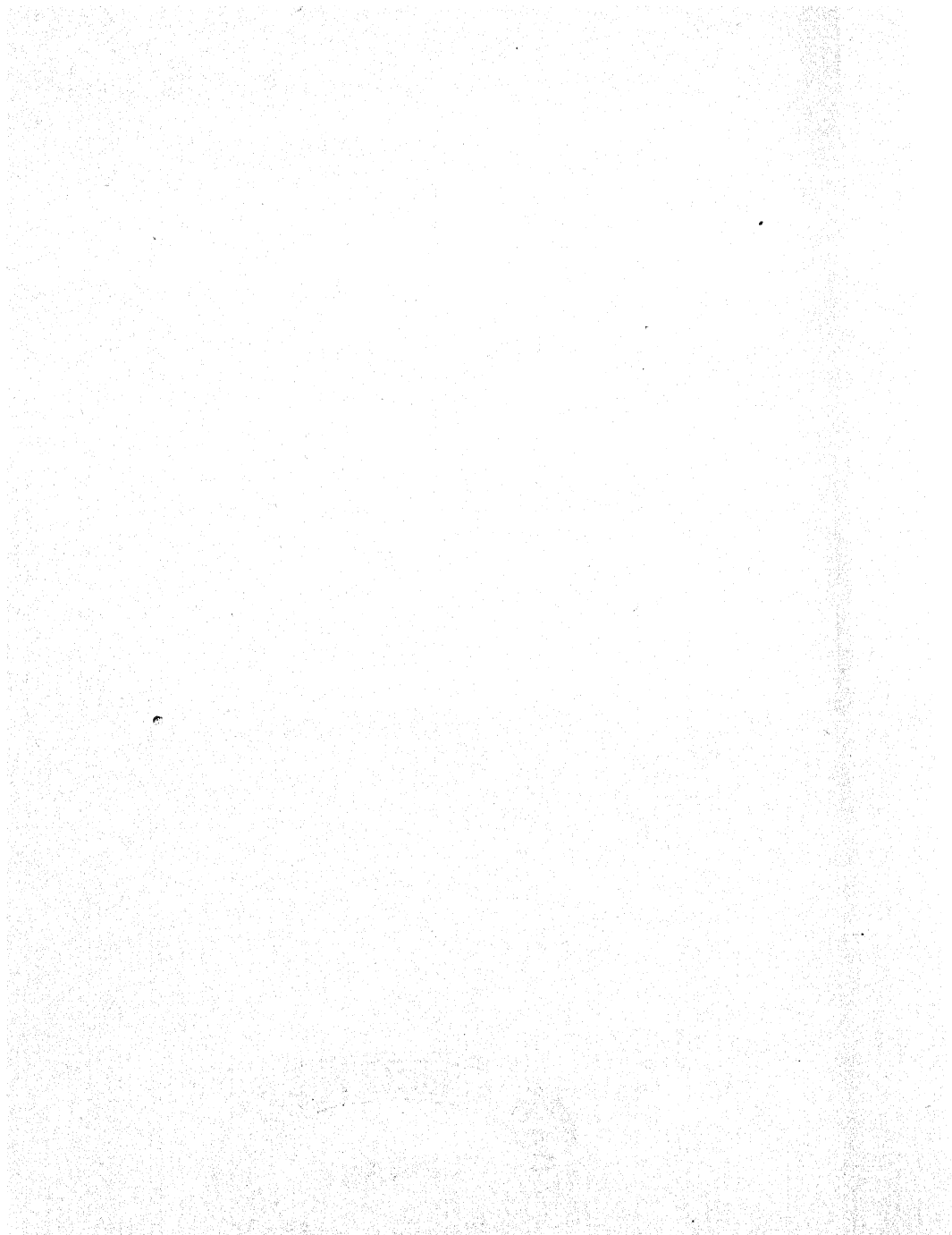
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INTO THE WIND



8 11 22 Rec. H. S. Warner



CHAPTER I

IT WAS A SOGGY, distasteful sort of day. Rain clouds slouched across the sky, letting loose vast downpours of warmish water at one moment and then suddenly splitting wide to make way for a boisterous flash of sunlight. There was something both capricious and determined about it.

A swimming stretch of muddy country road, flanked on either side by dejected dull yellow willows, abruptly became a glistening boulevard curbed with purest gold. A horse and cart clopped and splashed along through the sheen of it, with a young-looking man on the seat. The sun dashed brilliant patterns across his wet slicker, then audaciously withdrew, like a mischievous youngster, and left him gray and soggy again to contrast with the rich blue-green alfalfa which spread smoothly beyond the willows.

Through a slashing in the trees he saw momentarily, away ahead on the higher slopes of the watershed whose drippings fed the alfalfa, the soft

red tiled roof of the Dunning house. It was as warm as the polished apple he held in his hand, he thought. Amused at his comparison, he took a large, luscious bite to prove its accuracy and smiled as widely as the mouthful would allow. Yes, the Dunning house was like that. Red tile on the top, crisp fresh white beneath. Good and sound all the way through.

He saw the horse's ears flick backward. "I've got another in my pocket. You can have it in the barn. You'd better get up a little." He flicked the reins lightly, and the horse plunged into the mud more vigorously. There was nothing easy, apparently, about thrusting a hoof into this sucking knee-deep mud and pulling it out again to plunge it in once more. Mottled salty patches of sweat were showing on the big bay's rump and flank, with faint trickling lines across them left by the last splash of rain. The singletree played a thin rhythmic tune as the horse's lunges jogged the cart from side to side, and the soft jingle of harness rings kept time with it.

Galen Trent finished the apple, inspected the core minutely for possibilities of another bite, and finally put it in the pocket of his slicker with the apple he had saved for the horse. His fingers were moist from apple juice, and he thrust them under him to rub them off on the dry part of his slicker before he put on his damp glove again. But all the time he was thinking about something else.

He was glad he had taken the trunk down to

the little country station on the cart this way. It could have gone by the other road, in the car, to a station twice the distance off. But he had chosen to take it by the dirt road, rain or no rain. It gave him time to think.

There was something very final about hoisting a trunk from a country cart to a country-station platform and driving off again with only a stiff piece of printed claim check to show for it. A claim check with three smooth edges and one rough edge, where the perforations had been torn across so the other part could be attached to the trunk. Something very final. Something much too final.

The gate would be open when he arrived at the house road. He had left it open on purpose. There was no longer any stock that might get out on the county road. No cows, or horses, or pigs, or even turkeys. "Romancin'," he told himself aloud. "You know darn well there never was any stock running loose where it could get out that gate. You left it open because you didn't want to climb down and up again."

Anyway, he knew that loose or not, the three saddle horses were up for sale, and two of the jerseys were up for sale, and the third one would be soon. As soon as everything was settled. There never had been any pigs, so far as he knew. But whenever he let his gaze range over the large comfortable-looking, well-placed ranch it seemed as if there should be all sorts of livestock about. Not loose, perhaps, but about—where one could see

them and feed them apple cores on occasion. Well, there would be still one saddle horse, still one cart horse, still one jersey cow. At least for a time. Too bad you couldn't feed apples to tractors.

He scowled at that. Tractors. With great cold metal monsters of tools behind them, squeaking and shrilling and tearing up broad bands of earth with their dragging claws. Gnawing into tawny grass, sending late poppy petals scattering, spreading a rich brown-black across the autumn hills, and making the poison oak above the fence line gaudier than ever by contrast. There was something brutal and efficient about tractors, he thought, being city bred, himself.

The horse was tugging harder, more easily, the last thousand feet to the gate, and now his mud-caked hoofs made dull thudding sounds on the macadam they had come upon at the bend. By the time they had reached the gate a good deal of the mud lay in lumps behind them to mark their trail, and the trim gray hoofs turned reddish as they passed within to the red gravel ranch road.

An Irish setter's whirling tail propelled him down the slope in the wake of his ringing barks, and the horse whuffed at him as he came alongside.

Galen moved over on the seat and checked the horse slightly, though they were almost at the house. "Come on. Jump!" The setter landed with a scratch and a scramble and thrust a wet nose straight into his face.

"Cripes, you needn't kiss me! I've not been gone half an hour!"

"Oh, what a whopper!" Sabra Dunning came out on the terrace which ran across the front of the house, behind a low white wall. "What a whopper."

"Who says what's a whopper?" Galen Trent looked at her. "You mustn't ever let MacLaren see you with your hair looking like that."

"It's a whopper that you've been gone only half an hour, and I just combed my hair five minutes ago. It's irrepressible. Did you catch the train with my trunk?"

"Baldy!" Trent demanded so sharply that the horse's ears flicked back at him. "You hear that? We haul that trunk all the way to the station, and she asks us if we caught the train with it. Who ever heard of catching a train with a trunk, Baldy?"

Baldy turned his head as far as the harness would permit and nickered.

"Hmmm. Apple, you say? All right. In the barn." He looked at Sabra's soft, fair hair which had taken on a glint of bronze in the spear of sunlight that had split a cloud to get at her, and he shook his head solemnly. "How you going to keep a cap on that?"

"Wait till I get one," she replied. "Glue, maybe, or adhesive."

"I'll put Baldy away and give him his apple."

"Where did you get an apple?" She knew he had not been in the Dunning orchard up behind the house.

"Stole it off one of the company's trees."

"You didn't!"

"I did. Tore my slicker, too." He displayed a short three-cornered tear at the bottom of his raincoat. "Baldy jiggled me."

"Good thing no one saw you." The company which operated the two-thousand-acre fruit ranch adjoining the Dunning place was very snippy about its fruit.

"A napple a day keeps the doctor away," Galen told her over his shoulder, headed for the barn.

"You let Ted put Baldy up, Galen. Della is waiting."

"Oh, gee, I'm sorry. Be right in."

The raincoat made a flat whapping sound that reached her through the open window of the living room, he came back so fast. And she heard the door of the rear hall close behind him, then his long steps down the hall rug. The setter got into the room ahead of him, after all, and went straight to the broad fireplace hearth to lie down and clean his paws.

"What took you so long?" Sabra asked, her gray eyes sober. "I hope they didn't say it was overweight or something. It was only a Pullman trunk. Express takes everything, I thought."

"Oh no—nothing about the trunk. I was long because I was thinking."

"Five feet eleven and one half inches—because you were thinking. What about, Doctor Trent? I thought you'd sworn off thinking."

"It comes back, now and then, in spite of all I can do."

"Lunch is served," a quiet voice said in the doorway.

"Gee, Della—give me just a second!" Galen strode out and came back a moment later, his hair, his face, his hands, and his grin all in order.

"What were you thinking about that took a whole hour?" Sabra demanded when they were seated opposite each other at the heavy walnut table which seemed longer than ever lately. "Tell me, what were you thinking about?"

"You—in blue chambray and a white apron and that hair." Galen chuckled as Sabra patted it down with a quick sweeping gesture that was almost a habit of hers. "You in blue chambray and white cuffs and white collar and a white apron and a red line on the back of your neck because your collar rubs."

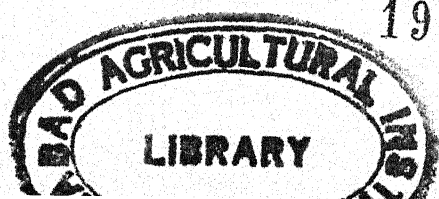
"You nut."

"You in a white apron and white cuffs and collars and a red line and blue chambray *and* a white cap with wings in front and a perfect box plait in the back and nothing to pin it to but those shredded sunbeams you wear for hair.

"You in a white cap and a white uniform and a white face and no red line on your neck any more because you're too pale to be able to dig up a red line—even from a rubbing collar—only your collar'll be a stand-upper then."

"Ah—Doctor Gloomin' Trent is with us again."

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"You in a white uniform and a white cap and a graduate nurse's pin—— Oh, dingbust it all, Sabra!"

"Now you stop. Right there."

"No, but seriously, you don't really have to be a nurse to help me in the work we want to do out here. I could teach you lots of things myself, once we got started. And seriously——"

"And seriously, Galen," she interrupted him, "it's all settled. You know it's all settled."

"Not everything."

"What?"

"I've been thinking."

"So you said, but that was only an excuse for the time you'd taken out to steal company apples, I believe."

"Not quite all of it. What I've been thinking is this. You shouldn't sell this place. You should keep it."

"But how? I can't farm it. You know that. I never could. Anyway—it wasn't ever a farm or a ranch. It was ho-o——" Sabra got up swiftly and swung away from the table with a muffled "Excuse me, please," and was out of the room.

"She can't get used to it, Doctor Galen," said Della's kindly voice behind him at the movement of chairs. "Don't mind. She'll be back in a moment. You're right; she mustn't sell this place."

"Whoops!" Galen Trent studied the housekeeper's wrinkled face. "You're with me? Then we'll put it through."

"Of course I'm with you, Doctor Galen. I've thought about it until I can't sleep, but it's hard to figure out."

"We'll figure it somehow."

"You can't have cake and eat it too," Sabra informed him, returning with a carefully placed smile. "And that's what it would be—having cake and eating it too. Not even Fa—not even *Father* would have said it could be done."

"Listen," Galen said as old Della went out to the kitchen again. "Let me tell you what my five feet eleven and a half have arrived at, clopping through the mud. I still believe it can be done, Brahbie."

Her eyes met his at the sound of that nickname by which her father had often called her. She herself as a baby had invented it. "So that's why you insisted on the cart and Baldy and that muddy road?"

"Partly. I think better when I've got something else to do."

"Like stealing apples, for instance."

"Mmmm. Where's Della going, after—well, *after*?"

"Into town, I guess. I'll try to help her find a job."

"And where's Ted going?"

"Oh, Galen, I wish I knew! He's so old and so twisted up with his arthritis. I wish I knew where he'd go! It's horrid, just plain horrid, making an old man like Ted start out and look for work when he's been here all his life almost. Just because he

won't *not* work. He says he'd go daffy, as he calls it, if he had nothing to do. But he hasn't enough money to buy himself a place. He took care of his sister for so long. I saw him put Bessie in the pasture this morning, and he was talking to her as if she were a person. She was actually nodding at him. I guess even cows feel lost when their pals are gone. Ted feels the same way. Every animal on the place is a friend of his. Imagine, as old as he is, having to start again."

Sabra broke off, noticing that Galen had finished, and tinkled the little silver table bell which had belonged to her grandmother.

When Della had gone again for the last time Galen picked up the thread of their talk. "I've got an idea that I think will work, if you'll let me tell you about it."

"Of course, Galen. Oh, I know I was cross last night. I couldn't help it. Everything's piled up so. I wasn't cross, exactly, but if I sounded cross I could keep from——"

"I know. You were furioso. I was scared to a jelly. But now I know you were bluffing, because you realize that if you don't keep me scared you won't be able to keep me at all, I'm so inconstant. And now I'm all over being scared. So for once you're going to listen to me, youngster, and——"

"I'm twenty-one!"

"That's only three times seven, and seven's nothing at all. Don't interrupt. There's no reason whatever, that I can see, why Della and Ted shouldn't

stay right here and go right on doing what they are doing, when you've got——”

“But you don't understand, Galen. Or I mean you won't listen to me. How could they? Don't you realize that it takes money to run a big place like this? And keep the house in order? Ted couldn't do the outside work alone. I've let the others go. Della could manage the house and feed Ted, but—but don't you realize that there's nothing to do it with? There's just plain not money enough. Don't you realize that, Galen? I've told you.”

He nodded. Yes, he knew. But before he could speak she went on:

“Why, if I weren't going into training, Galen, there wouldn't be enough for me to live on. Unless I sell the place. Don't you see? I'd rather do anything else under the sun. Anything. Just anything at all. But I've thought until I'm dizzy, and I can't see any way out of selling the place—or trying to. I've got less than a thousand dollars. When the taxes are paid this year and I pay a hundred for tuition and something more for uniforms and——”

“I know,” Galen interrupted her once more. “But I see a way to bank that cash and keep the place and leave Ted and Della right where they are and go into training, just as you've planned, and everything else we've planned. If you'll let me I'll tell you about it.”

“All right, go ahead. But you must have found a sheep somewhere with a golden fleece on it.” They had finished eating, and she suggested that

they go out on the terrace. "It's going to clear up, I think."

As she went ahead of him through the doorway her carefully smoothed hair with its wavy curl was all on end again, and he said, "That's what'll happen when you sail down a ward."

"What can you expect, with all this gusty wind? Randolph-Macey's not an open-air hospital." She would keep her hair down on duty if she had to put brilliantine on it, she said, and he told her that if she did that he would shampoo it for her the first time he caught her with it on.

"Why, Doctor Trent!" Sabra exclaimed accusingly. "You said that we would hardly know each other when I get on duty! Shampoo my brilliantine off? What'll that do to your hospital formality and pettiquette you've told me so much about?"

Dr. Galen Trent, senior interne at Randolph-Macey Hospital, tried his best to look disapproving, but a chuckle got past in spite of him. "Petticoats and pettiquette—anyway, you'd better not brilliantine."

"Where's your golden fleece?" she demanded, looking around, reminding him of what they had meant to talk about.

"Right in front of you and to the left of you and the right of you——"

"Stop quoting poetry! That was the Light Brigade, anyway, and it volleyed and thundered. I don't see any cannon, any more than I see any

golden fleeces, or even any plain wool ones. All I see's a sheep."

"Ba-a," said Galen with a little bow. "You shouldn't carry a mirror around with you. For you're the sheep, milady, if you can look where I've said and not see a golden fleece. At least golden enough to keep the tax bills on the Dunning Ranch from being sent to Sam Jones, or whoever."

"Hush!" Sabra said, her eyes darkening. "Please don't make me cry again." She looked straight into the gleaming sun that was finally free of clouds, making an excuse for the welling tears. "You mean I could farm it?" she asked huskily, incredulously.

"No. Not you. I don't mean that exactly. But somebody could."

"Of course. Lots of people could, or at least I thought there were lots of people who could. Maybe there are people who can, but you know that I've not been able to find anyone, not even with Mr. Stanley's help, unless I agree to pay a much larger salary than I possibly could pay. And we haven't been able to find anyone to lease it, either, who will guarantee enough to carry the costs. Mr. Stanley doesn't want me to lose it in the end for someone else's debts. It's free and clear now. He says it's better to sell outright than to have to let it go for a great deal less than it's worth because I can't pay taxes next year. And I know I won't be able to." She had been talking faster and faster as she reached that point.

Galen knew all that, she realized. She had talked

it over and over with him. There was nothing new she could tell him about it, and she was almost sure there was nothing new he could suggest to her about it. But there must be. She could see from the line of his mouth; she could see from the certain, assured look in his dark eyes; she could see from the fact that there was not a single hint of a wrinkle on his forehead. When that forehead was smooth you could be sure that Dr. Galen Trent knew what he was about, that any doubts he might have had were swept away.

"Where is your golden fleece?" she asked. "I don't exactly see it."

"Well, by all the bones in Gray's *Anatomy*!" he exclaimed, getting up off the terrace wall where he had been sitting. "You've said it! You've clinched it!"

"What *are* you talking about?"

"Fleeces!" Galen replied. "Sheepses. *These-es*," he said, sitting down beside her again to list all the things he was thinking about. "Look, lady. You've got one hundred acres of hills and sixty acres of tillable land and forty acres of waste and woodland. It's free and clear, and it's yours."

"And the taxes come to two dollars and seventy cents an acre, without——"

"Without the master house, which is this one," Galen finished for her. "Without the foreman's house, which is that one." He pointed off to the south where the four-room cottage stood in its frame of trees. "Without the barns, without the

tool house, without the tractor house, without the pump house, without the milk house——”

“Without the cows or the tractor operator or the——” Sabra began.

“Without the big *idea* I’ve got and will tell you if you’ll only keep still and listen.” Galen waggled his head at her.

“I’m *all* ears.”

“Then lend me ’em, for cat’s sake!”

“With interest, only begin, can’t you?”

“You know the College of Agriculture?”

“Passing acquaintance only,” she said, giggling. “I’ve never been inside the gate.”

“Well, look—it graduated a bunch of men in June. They’ve been spending four years or three years or two years or whatever it is they spend learning how to be farmers and ranchers.”

“Ummm.” Sabra nodded. “And they all want jobs. But I’ve told you I can’t pay——”

Dr. Trent slapped each one of his many pockets separately and finally let out a loud call for “Della!” who came expectantly to the terrace door. “You got any adhesive?” he asked her. “I can’t make this woman keep still.”

“I thought at least there was an earthquake coming!” Della’s old face wrinkled deeper at him. “I’ve the dishes to do.” She shook a finger at Sabra. “You’d better be listening to him, I think.” She went back inside.

“All right, why don’t you go on?” Sabra demanded virtuously. “I’m still.”

"As I was trying to get said, I'll bet you a hat I could find a grade-A Aggie graduate who would be glad to get the chance to run a swell piece of land like this, with all the equipment you have and that trig little house to live in. There'd be Della to keep his wife company, if he had one, or to cook for him, if he didn't. And Ted to give him the low-down. There'd be sheep to keep the pastures neat and cows to keep the alfalfa clipped and maybe corn or something to keep the other land yielding. And I'll bet you another hat that if all he had to buy was his cows and sheep, and if you'd let him use your tools free, provided he bought his own gas and oil, and if he was the right kind of guy to begin with—why, I'd even bet you three hats that he'd pay the taxes on this place and get himself on his feet and have you on yours, too, in three years.

"There." Galen drew a long breath, not having taken one in the last few sentences. "That's my golden fleece." He turned his head at right angles to study her profile. "What you think of it?"

"The Golden Fleece was a myth, you know." She bent to pick a blade of lawn grass and was busy a moment, trying to make a whistle with it, held between her thumbs.

"Give me that—you're not doing it right." Galen got a grass blade of his own and filled the terrace with a harsh squawk that brought the setter roaring, while all Sabra could do was produce a loud blowing sound.

"You're so smart," she said. "Do you suppose he really could, if you could find him?"

"I'll bet he could."

"Why wouldn't Mr. Stanley have thought about it? He doesn't want me to have to give up the place."

"Lawyers are too cautious. He knows you can't live here by yourself with Della and Ted. And he knows I can't very well live here—not right now, anyway. And he knows you can't keep it up alone and that we probably couldn't even together, for a while. So he says sell it and put the money into something that'll bring you an income and take adequate care of your future."

"My goodness, have you been talking to him? That's just exactly what he did say."

"Unh-unh. But I know. A lawyer talked to me, too, when my—when I was up against it, as you are. My case was different. I hadn't even begun medical school then. I had to have cash. And there wasn't so much involved. It was adequate care of my present that I had to be concerned about then. Now look. If you'll let me, I'll drive up there and talk to the dean, or whatever they have, and see what he thinks the chances are of finding someone. Then we can put it up to Stanley."

"It sounds too right to be possible. There's something the matter with it, or Mr. Stanley would surely have suggested it. He has ever so many estates to handle. He must have met this kind of problem before."

"Maybe. But it won't do any harm to try, will it?"

"How soon can we try? I have to see Miss MacLaren tomorrow." She couldn't very well postpone her interview with the superintendent of nurses at the hospital, she said, when everything else in regard to her entrance requirements had been taken care of.

"Get your hat," Galen said, letting his cuff fall back over his watch. "It's one-thirty. We can get to Davis by three."

"I was packing——" Sabra began and stopped in surprise at herself. "Nut. When my trunk's already gone. I'll tell Della."

The setter followed her inside, and she went across the living room with her hand on his head. "Maybe we'll be able to work it," she told him. "Maybe you're going to be able to stay right here. And maybe I can come out on week-ends sometimes and see you!" They burst into the kitchen together, and Della's face lost some of its soberness as she turned toward them.

"Della, Doctor Galen is going to drive me up to the college at Davis. We want to see the dean there, the man who advises the students, you know. He thinks, I mean Galen does, that maybe the dean can do something about this place. It'll be just wonderful if he can. We may be late for supper."

"That's no matter," Della said, trying to look as if she understood what Sabra was getting at.

Sabra's sentences had a way of interfering with each other when she was excited, and she was clearly excited now. Della could not recall seeing her look so hopeful in all the two months which had passed since her father's death. "You can have supper any time up to midnight," she said, putting enthusiasm into her own voice. "If you're later than that we'll call it breakfast. You tell Doctor Galen not to be driving too fast now."

When Galen brought his car around Della came out, carrying Sabra's soft woollen topcoat and a copper-colored beret. "You won't be warm enough coming back, even if that is a flannel dress."

Sabra took them gratefully. "I'd never have thought of them, I'm so anxious to get up there!" She pulled the car door shut behind her. She and Galen sat in front, with Shane's red setter head between their two arms, so that he could attend to his customary back-seat driving which the swift five-passenger car allowed him.

When Shane drove with Sabra alone, in her roadster, he sat on the seat beside her, though lately they had not been doing much driving. On the roadster seat he must sit still and be dignified, but he knew very well what were the possibilities of Dr. Trent's car. He could bark as loudly as he liked at every dog they passed.

There had been some discussion about this matter, not that Shane understood any of it. But Galen had said, "Let him have his fun. He's back there. He can't jump on the wheel for emphasis." Dr.

Trent would not listen to Sabra's fears that someday Shane would forget whose car he was in and send her off the road. "Dogs're smart," he insisted. Shane wouldn't forget.

"Make the dog behave, Doctor," Della said, stepping back, half laughing, knowing all the time what was in Sabra's mind. She went on into the house again and turned at the door to see the car swing north through the wide gateway. Sabra's eyes had been almost blue. That meant that she was at least a little bit happy again. It had been a long time, Della thought.

"The sun's come out. Maybe it'll be a sign," she said, carrying the lunch dishes to the cupboard to put them away.

CHAPTER II

SHORTLY before eleven o'clock Wednesday morning Sabra Dunning made her way around the scaffolding at the main door of Randolph-Macey Hospital and entered the building. Although the new section of the huge place was as yet unfinished, the interior already was as coldly clean as a combination of gleaming white tile and a hospital atmosphere could make it.

It's as impersonal as the inside of an electric refrigerator, Sabra thought as she walked toward a desk labeled INFORMATION, which had a high revolving index at one end and a bowl of zinnias at the other. A young nurse in blue and white sat behind it. The nurse arose as Sabra came nearer and gave her a scrutinizing look when she asked to be directed to the office of the superintendent of nurses.

"Miss MacLaren's office is in Macey. Down that corridor there. The second door on the left."

"Thank you." Sabra went down the wide corri-

dor, past a glassed-in office where several typewriters were clicking, and on to a partly closed door marked:

SUPERINTENDENT OF NURSES
DIRECTOR OF TRAINING SCHOOL

Jean Cameron MacLaren, R.N.

Sabra knocked lightly.

A tall woman in white uniform and cap opened the door wide, disclosing a narrow passageway leading to a room beyond.

Sabra gave her name and mentioned the time of her appointment, which had been arranged by mail. Several letters had been exchanged between her and this office. First her letter requesting information about the training school, then her application for admission, then the school's request for full and detailed information about her, for which they sent a mimeographed blank with a place for her name, printed, and on through the years and months and days of her age to a certified list of her courses in high school and college and including even such items as her height, her weight, whether she wore glasses or not. She must send back with this, the paper said, a dentist's report as to the condition of her teeth, a doctor's report as to the condition of her health, a negative Wassermann report, the certificates of inoculation against typhoid and smallpox. And now there was this "personal interview" for which she had come today and which would be followed later by an-

other general physical examination by a doctor on the hospital staff.

As she stood waiting at that half-open door the first line of the application blank came back to her in her best pen printing: Dunning, Sabra G., 21 yrs., 3 mths., 8 days, and in her imagination she added another line, *shivering in both knees*.

"Miss MacLaren will see you now." It was the woman in white again. She led the way into the room, the speed of her movement suggesting that she had miles to go, when it was really less than fifteen feet. Sabra could not help noticing how smoothly she stopped, for all her swift walk. "Miss MacLaren, this is Miss Dunning," she said quietly and withdrew as swiftly as she had entered.

A dark-haired woman, also in white uniform and cap, looked up at Sabra from behind her polished table desk. "How do you do, Miss Dunning? Will you be seated?" A ray of sunlight pierced the Venetian blind and struck directly on a heavy gold pin she wore, giving off a steady gleam from its place on the left breast pocket of her uniform. She indicated a chair facing the desk.

"Thank you." Sabra sat down before that inscrutable face with its immaculate cap.

"You have come for your personal interview, Miss Dunning, following your application to enter the training school." It was a statement of fact, and Sabra controlled a nod of confirmation. Somehow a nod seemed unsuitable here. "Your papers are satisfactory," the cool voice went on. "There

are one or two personal questions which we wish to have answered." Goodness, Sabra thought, what personal thing haven't they already asked? But the next question answered her in regard to one of them.

"Why do you wish to study nursing, Miss Dunning?"

Oh. That was easy. At least it had always seemed easy, until it had to be put into words, to be stated. Sabra was still a moment, searching the face of the woman before her. A middle-aged woman, she was, with direct dark eyes and an attractive face that was somehow sobered by a suggestion of concern or responsibility. Responsibility, Sabra decided it was.

"I should like to be able to be of use," she replied at last, her own voice quiet as the question had been. There. It was said. How many times had she thought those words! How many times, these last few months, had she considered all they meant. Even if she had never spoken them to anyone before this moment she had known how they would sound. But she had not expected to feel shy about them. Why was that? (What am I being so foolish about? I'm not ashamed of it. I know what I mean.)

"I see." The superintendent of nurses lowered her eyes to some papers on her desk. There was a faint smile in them when she looked up again. "And you like the idea of the uniform?"

"Uniform?" Sabra asked. "Why, I suppose

they're necessary." She stopped, uncertain about the shrewd glance that reply got her, and she decided not to tell Miss MacLaren that for all of six years she had known she wanted to become a nurse. But that ambition had nothing to do with the kind of clothes nurses wore. Does she think I want to come into training because I've an idea I'll look well in a uniform? A flicker of amusement crossed Sabra's mouth at the thought.

"You live in the city?" Miss MacLaren was asking, her scrutiny of the papers finished.

"No, Miss MacLaren. My home has been in the country. I have come in for a few days, so I could be here in case there are examinations to take, or something, if my—if this interview is satisfactory."

"I see. You live with your parents?"

Sabra swallowed. "No. My parents are not living."

"Are there not many professions, Miss Dunning, in which one can be 'of use,' as you say?"

"Yes, indeed. But I want to be a nurse."

"Oh. Why, Miss Dunning?"

Sabra felt the dark eyes searching her this second time that question had been asked. Well, she thought, she has a right to ask me that. But the question was so direct this time that it made her hesitate, not quite sure how to express what she really felt. "I'm afraid I'm one of these people who has an urge to do something that counts," she said finally. "I know people make fun of you these days for that sort of thing. They call it the 'missionary

instinct,' I believe. But I don't care what they call it; I'd still like to have a part in the control of disease. It's what I want to do. I'm willing to work hard to learn how to do it. That is why I want to be a nurse."

Miss MacLaren made no comment, and Sabra waited, wondering. Did the superintendent of nurses think it amusing of her to admit a thing like that? Goodness, I don't know what she thinks, and I don't believe she's going to tell me. I wish she'd say something. Sabra made up her mind in that moment to say nothing of the carefully laid plans she and Galen and her father had made before her father's death. Plans for when Galen would be ready to take up his practice. They were going to open a country clinic on the ranch at home, with Galen attending to the active work, her father acting as consultant while he went on with his research, and herself as a follow-up assistant. But Miss MacLaren would think she was getting the cart before the horse if anything was said about that now. She'd better prove she could be a nurse first.

"You are in good health?" Miss MacLaren's face had changed very slightly, as if she might have smiled. "You seem to be."

"Oh yes. I'm never ill." Sabra felt almost at ease again.

"We have a class entering the eighteenth of this month. A week from Thursday. Could you be ready then, Miss Dunning?"

"Yes."

Miss MacLaren put a definite black pencil check against a list of names on one of the papers before her. "You understand from the bulletin of information about the tuition fee, the charge for uniforms, the probable cost of your textbooks, and so on. All fees must be paid in advance. You are prepared to do that, Miss Dunning?"

"Yes, certainly."

"As you know, your board, room, and laundry are provided by the training school. There will be no further examinations until the class is entered. Your fees must be paid on that day and not before. Definite instructions in that regard will be mailed to you."

Miss MacLaren paused, again consulting the papers. "You have no responsibilities in regard to brothers or sisters or other dependents, Miss Dunning?"

"No. None whatever."

Miss MacLaren gathered up the papers and placed them in a drawer of the file at her left elbow, and the bright gold glint on her pin went out, revealing a double red-and-white cross which Sabra had not seen before. "You will be accepted as a member of the training-school probationary group, Miss Dunning." Her eyes and hands were busy with the filing. "Your papers are satisfactory, as I said. This interview has been satisfactory. Full information regarding the procedure for you to follow on the eighteenth will be mailed to you."

She finished with the file and turned back toward Sabra. "Have you any questions, Miss Dunning?" The gleam of sunlight found its goal again.

"Is there a bulletin giving an outline of the textbook work, Miss MacLaren?"

"Yes. It will be mailed to you. Shall you remain in town as you planned?"

"No." Sabra kept her relief on that score out of her voice. "I think I shall go back home tonight. It is not far."

Miss MacLaren's head bowed slightly, but she stopped a smile at its beginnings as she rose in dismissal. Sabra thanked her, bowed, and went out, her lips smiling, her teeth shut against the long breath she could hardly wait to draw. Were training schools always as formal as this?

In the main corridor she turned left toward the Macey entry office, through the door which she could see the street. There was a large telephone switchboard here, behind a high counter, and a girl wearing head phones sat before it, speaking muted words into a curved black funnel suspended in front of her. There was a nurse in white at the counter and a man in white, both of them talking to a man in business clothes. His eyes met Sabra's as she approached, and the others glanced at her when she spoke. "Good morning, Doctor Trent."

She went right on out and down the steps and up the steep street, passing what was left of Macey, with its red brick, and on past Randolph, with its white—these two combined hospitals in whose

training school for nurses she would spend her next three years if she was accepted at the end of probation. She came to a covered roadway leading in from the street to a place within the buildings where two wide doors were propped open. An ambulance entrance, she decided, and, glancing back, she saw that it was cut into the second floor of the Randolph section of the hospital, which here was level with the street because of the hill.

Just then she heard a man's footsteps coming, and she crossed the roadway, eyes down, thinking. The footsteps came along behind, overtaking her, going up the hill in a great hurry. But ten feet ahead they turned and came back.

"Good morning, Miss Dunning!" He passed her without checking his pace, going into the ambulance road again. "Good morning, Doctor Trent!" she had replied. Neither of them changed pace a fraction.

A moment later he was back beside her. "Have a heart!"

"Do I pass?"

"At the head of the class, but don't you pass me again like that!"

"Not even on duty?"

"Never mind that," he said. "Let's go have lunch."

"Aren't you supposed to be in bed and asleep? What are you doing up this time of day?" Sabra tried to reprove him.

"Well, you had an appointment, didn't you?"

Didn't I have to keep it? I can go to bed any time. Tell me, how do you like nursing?"

She did not know much about it as yet, she told him. "It seems a good deal like a cold shower, so far. Maybe it'll run warmer later on."

"Hmmm." Galen's murmur implied that he thought it would. "What are you coming way up here for?" he demanded.

"Looking for possibilities for walks after I'm incarcerated. But I haven't told you. I don't have to come to stay until the eighteenth. That gives me ten whole days to interview men from the College of Agriculture, if there are any who want to be interviewed, that is."

"There are," Galen said. "That's what I'm climbing this hill for and getting all out of breath. You won't have any difficulty when you get to be a ward heeler if you can keep up a speed like this. I had a phone call from Dean Carlson this morning. There's a man coming out to the ranch tonight. I knew you could make it, even if you had to come into town again in the morning. But as it is, I'll drive you out and have lunch with you, if I'm invited, and still be able to get back in time to knock off a few hours' sleep."

It had been fortunate that they had arranged for the dean to get in touch with Galen at the hospital, Sabra thought, for when they were in the dean's office she herself had no way of knowing what was ahead of her for the rest of the week.

And now, in addition, she was free to go back to the ranch. "Things seem to be looking up," she said. "Miss MacLaren told me my interview was satisfactory, and now there's a man wants to talk about the ranch."

"What did you expect?" Galen asked, covering both points at once. "You may have to interview several," he warned her. "But I don't think he would send down anyone who'd be a complete dud. You'd consult Mr. Stanley, of course, before you signed anything?"

"Yes, indeed. I'm sure he'd be glad if we could find someone." Sabra forced her voice to keep cheerful, though the old doubt and depression crept into her thoughts in spite of her at that word "could."

"It'll work out," Galen said positively, and his sureness made her hopeful once more.

They went to Sabra's hotel and got her small trunk, laughing at all the unnecessary hauling it had been given, and headed the car down the steep hills for the nearest approach to the causeway over the water and on through the tunnel on Midway Island, which for an instant reminded Sabra of hospital corridors again.

"It's the shiny tile," she said aloud, forgetting that Galen would not know what her thoughts had been doing.

"What?" He turned to glance at her without slackening his speed as they shot into daylight

again and on toward the toll gates and the fanning ramps on the far side of the water.

Suddenly a booming masculine voice filled the air: "*Will the doctor please keep in his lane? Will the doctor keep his Buick in the lane? Buick license 7Y 28 please keep within the lane!*"

"Huh?" Galen braked abruptly. "Doctor—gosh! He must mean me!"

"No-o!" said Sabra. "He couldn't mean you! You were only straddling two lanes, Doctor Trent!" The car pulled over, and Galen stuck his head out.

"All right, Gabriel! Sorry!"

"Thank you, Doctor!" the disembodied voice boomed again.

"Too bad he couldn't hear you call him that," Sabra said. "He's got it coming. You know, he nearly scared me over the railing the first time he hooted at me. I don't know how he sees so much from that runway he's got above the toll gates."

"What were you doing?"

"Standing up—almost. Trying to see a boat that was going to pass under. He yelled, 'Sit down, lady in the gray roadster!' I sat down so fast I bounced. If I hadn't had the top down I'd've cracked my skull, I bet. You wouldn't think he could see your doctors' plates from way up there. I suppose they can spot a caduceus easily, though."

"He's got binoculars." Galen waved to the look-out as he slowed the car for the gates, and they

sped on, taking the shore ramp to miss the business district and cutting across farther out to the speedway which would take them through the hills and into the county where the Dunning Ranch was located.

"Oh, I forgot to telephone Della!" Sabra exclaimed as they turned into the red gravel road at home. But Shane had already announced them, and Della was out at the rear of the house, looking to see who came. They saw her hurry back inside, and Galen chuckled.

"She's going to feed us, all right."

"You'd better not be too sure, young man. She might be hurrying to lock us out." It was fun to be foolish again, Sabra was thinking. It seemed such a long while since she had really been able to laugh at anything. Her father would have disliked her being gloomy, she knew, and she resolved to be sunnier from this on, even if she had to think about being sunny. But her thoughts were broken off by Shane's barks of welcome, and his paws came up on the door rail the instant the car stopped.

"Oh, you'll scratch, boy! Get down. No, no."

"But I trained him not to scratch!" Galen said, leaning to pat him. "I bet you can't find a single one."

She couldn't, either, search the Buick's enamel as she would. "You're marvelous," she said, walking across the terrace, the setter keeping his head carefully under her hand.

"Who, me?" Galen wanted to know.

"Mmmm—goodness, I'm going to miss him in training."

"Take him along," Galen advised; "he'd be good for what ails 'em."

During the course of the next few days Sabra interviewed no fewer than four College of Agriculture graduates who had been sent by Dean Carlson. There had been a letter at the house that afternoon when she and Galen had arrived, in which the dean suggested that she talk with them all before making her decision. He wanted the arrangement to succeed, he said, and it would be well not to rush the decision. Each of the men had spent some time going over the place, examining the land, farming equipment, fences, and water supply, taking soil samples and talking with Ted.

Mr. Stanley had advised Sabra to ask each man to make a statement on paper as to what he thought he could accomplish with the place at his disposal. The attorney had been very enthusiastic about the idea if the right man could be found.

There was something quite promising, Sabra thought, in the way the men had gone about it. She liked the friendly way they discussed things with her and the respectful manner in which they listened to old Ted, who for all his years and feebleness knew what could be done with land and stock. These men the dean had sent sounded to Sabra as if they would know how to get along well in the country community which had always

been her home and which, she could not deny, had its share of prejudices and its little fixed notions about this and that.

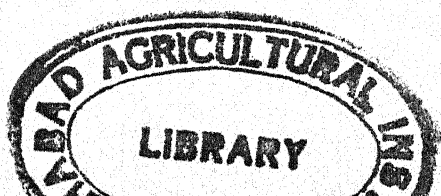
But when the four written proposals were spread out on the dining-room table and she and Galen looked them over, it was clear that the first applicant's estimates were the most conservative. She could tell from her father's books of records of the ranch that what this man suggested and the figures he named were fairly safe estimates. Maybe the other men were just more ambitious, but it might mean that they were too optimistic. There were several ranches of this size in the vicinity, and Sabra suspected that none of them was making quite so much money as one of the men thought possible.

Mr. Stanley agreed with her, and after the most careful scrutiny of the estimates and a thoroughgoing interview with the applicant himself (as was later reported to Sabra, with considerable amusement) the transaction was closed.

John Mason was the man's name. When asked if he was married he had grinned and said no, but that he was lucky enough to be engaged, and he would be married at once if he got the place.

"But what about being called for the draft, Mr. Mason?"

He pointed to his letter. "I was six months overage when the law became effective. I'll do my bit raising chops for 'em until they need me." He smiled at Sabra's obvious thought that he



didn't look overage and reminded her that "folks who live out of doors can keep young longer."

She thought about that on the train going back to the city for the beginning of her training and wondered what living within those polished hospital walls would do to her own "young" look. "I'll keep young if I keep sunny." And that was growing easier all the time.

CHAPTER III



ON THE AFTERNOON of the eighteenth Sabra Dunning walked ahead of the taxi driver who was carrying her bag and climbed the steps of a lean gray house which was part of the Nurses' Home of Randolph-Macey Hospital. The rest of the block on one side of the street was filled with houses exactly like it, except for the two at each end. As she and the driver went up the steps a blue-uniformed figure appeared in one of the narrow windows and moved away again.

At the door Sabra took the bag, thanked the driver, and entered the house. She climbed another dark flight of steps to the second floor, glanced about the narrow hall, and after an unanswered knock opened the door which was labeled C in dingy metal. It was just to the left of the stairs, across the hall. This was the room to which she had been assigned.

She closed the door behind her slowly. Then

she put her bag on the chair—the only chair—and checked an involuntary shiver. But there was a determined smile on her mouth as she stood there. After an instant she went to the room's one window, which was partly open, and leaned to look out.

Directly in front of her, not more than four feet away, rose the cold gray clapboard wall of House 24. She was in House 22, and she was surprised to discover that the gray was a clapboard wall instead of a shutter of some sort, as she had thought at first it must be, it was so close.

"I can look both up and down," she murmured, looking down to prove it. A cement walk filled the entire space between the buildings and led to a solid board gate in a closed fence at the rear, beyond which she could not see. Looking up, she found, again surprised, a considerable area of blue sky, and she laughed at herself. Hadn't she just come in from out of doors? "I'd forgotten it's a grand day!"

There were windows in the building next, both to the right and to the left of her own. The green blinds were high, and she could see the iron beds within the rooms. Two of them were occupied. Sleeping in the middle of the day seemed odd. They must be very tired, those nurses. And then she remembered that nurses had night duty as well as day duty.

"It's a cheerful spot," she said aloud, getting her head back inside carefully to avoid whacking

it on the sash. The bulletin had stated that a new nurses' home was to be built next year. There certainly was a great deal of room for improvement over what they had now, Sabra thought. She took off her things and opened her bag preparatory to unpacking it, measuring with her eye at the same time the five feet of bare floor with its spot of figured carpet which was between the white iron bed and the door. The bed seemed narrower than even a single bed had any right to be, and when she tried to sit on it she found it too high for comfort. There was a Turkey-red blanket folded across the foot of it, and she lifted it to test its weight and warmth. It must be made of felt, she thought, for it was harsh and heavy as a tarpaulin. She was still fingering it somewhat distastefully when a tap on the door made her swing around.

Her face brightened as she stepped to open the door. Her caller was a girl in nurses' blue and white, wearing a cap, and an expression which was at once speculative and expectant.

"Hello!" the girl said, drowning out Sabra's "How do you do?" "You're one of the new probs, aren't you? Well, I was up here to the bathroom a while ago, and the maid had your door open. I saw you have one of those red blankets on your bed. We've got two beds in our room. One of us has a red blanket, and one's got a gray one. We thought maybe you'd trade for the gray one, since you're alone, so ours could match."

"Certainly, if——"

"Oh, it's clean. It's just come back from the laundry and hasn't been used. It's still got the laundry paper on it."

"I wasn't thinking of that," Sabra said, for there had not been time for that to occur to her. "Will it be all right for me to—to change anything in the room? The equipment, I mean."

"Oh, sure you can. So long as you *have* an extra blanket. You've got to have one to show, unless you turn it in. But nobody'll care if you trade." She picked up the red blanket, adding its color to her brightness. "I'll bring the gray one right up."

Sabra left the door open, expecting her back directly. But ten minutes later she closed it again and went on with her unpacking. Finally there was another knock—a different-sounding knock.

It was the housemaid. She held out a gray blanket with a narrow paper band pinned around it. "The one downstairs said this was yours. I put a red one in here this morning. You better not let the housekeeper catch you trading things around. You're s'posed to get permission."

"Thank you," Sabra said, hurrying a smile to cover what she really was thinking. "It was kind of you to bring it—and to tell me."

"Humph," the maid remarked a little less glumly, and she went off down the dark hall, muttering something about having to change her list.

Sabra's hand was still on the knob of her own door when one farther along opened, and another nurse came out. She's as crisp as an Ivory-soap

advertisement, Sabra thought, her spirits reviving.

"Hi," the girl said, taking in everything at a glance. "When do you report?"

"This afternoon."

"Going over to supper tonight?" There was a suggestion of invitation in it, as if she wanted to help this new student feel at home.

"I had not planned to." Sabra knew that she might go where she pleased for supper, this last night of being free. She was going to dinner with Galen Trent, but she did not say so.

"Oh, I see," the nurse said wisely. "Got a date. Take all you can get. The food here's awful enough. You'll have plenty of it without cutting any dates. If I can help you, let me know. I'm in the next room there. I'm off at seven tonight."

Sabra thanked her, and as the girl skipped down the stairs she closed her door once more and put the gray blanket on her bed. Now everything about the place matched.

Apparently when a nurse said she was "off" she meant she was off duty. Everything was going to be different here, Sabra suspected, from the way you lived to the way you talked. She wondered how long it would take her to become accustomed to it all.

She would not allow herself to think of her sunny room at home. Why would anyone paint a floor gray, she wondered. That awful blanket had been at least a spot of color, if she had realized it in time. But she knew she did not like glaring reds.

She pushed the electric-light switch, and it made a sharp click. That helped somewhat. It was only then that she discovered the dull green scrim curtains at either side of the window. They were so dull and so narrow, no one would know they were there without the light on. Perhaps she could get permission to change them if she brought something from home.

"I mean Della could send me something," she said firmly, determined not to run out home again first thing.

She found a new roll of white paper in the top drawer of the stiff golden-oak dresser and lined all four drawers before she put her things away. There were two narrow ones at the top and one shallow full-length drawer and one deep one.

Soon everything was arranged but her tooth-brushes and nail brush and soap. She was standing with them in her hand, her eyes rather puzzled, her thoughts wool-gathering, when a sharp, noisy hiss sounded behind her and a spurt of steam shot into the air.

"Good gracious! Oh-h. It's the radiator." Her shoulders dropped back to normal, and she breathed again. She could not help laughing at herself for being alarmed. The laugh helped, and she set out to find the bathroom. It was at the end of the hall, and either it was always spotlessly clean, or it had just been cleaned. But there was no cabinet of any sort in it, and there were no shelves.

She carried her toilet equipment back to her own room. One of the smaller drawers would have to be her bathroom cabinet. She must be sure to get a drinking glass before she came in tonight. Drug stores would have them. That radiator must be trying to heat the whole house. She turned it off, and it protested with a raucous, grating sound somewhere in its pipes. She would not need to set her alarm clock if they turned on the heat at regular hours in the morning, she thought, trying to convince herself that the idea was funny.

It was a positive relief when the hands of her little white clock arrived at a quarter past two and she could go out of this bleak room. In fifteen minutes her formal connection with the Randolph-Macey Hospital Training School for Nurses would begin. The first meeting of the probationers was set for half-past two o'clock.

Sabra lifted her hairbrush and put it back into the drawer without touching her hair. "I'd better not stir it up." She did not know, even now, how serious Galen might have been in all his teasing about that. "I can't help it if it flies all over. It always has. Maybe I could curl it tighter if I put it up on wires or something."

She eyed it speculatively in the slightly sun-streaked mirror and giggled. It was the only vivacious-looking thing in the room. She had better let it alone. She pulled on her soft felt hat which somehow looked jaunty, no matter how hard she tried to make it look dignified, slipped into her

tweed topcoat, and went down the stairs, doing her best to move as lightly as that last nurse had moved.

She crossed the street, blinking in the bright sunlight, and went up the steep steps to Macey Entrance, then on to the second floor of Randolph, where the first meeting of the entering group was to be held. The classroom was shut off from a polished corridor by two wide ground-glass doors which opened either way, and as Sabra entered several young women turned toward her. Two or three of them were standing, but some had already seated themselves in the broad-armed desk chairs which were arranged in classroom rows.

Sabra sank into the first chair she came to—the end one on the front row—and turned side-wise in a sort of panic to speak to the group scattered behind her. "Do you all feel as new as I do?" Some of these girls looked very young, she thought.

"I'm sort of scared," a tall dark girl answered her, her black eyes somehow serious and suggesting laughter at the same time. "Which house are you in?" she asked, as if to keep the talk going.

"The number is 22," Sabra said. "I haven't yet discovered any other way to distinguish it from the rest."

"They're all alike," someone else said, as if every one of them didn't already know that. She addressed the dark girl. "Which one are you in?"

"On the corner, at the top of the block. Thank goodness I won't have to count houses to pick the

one I belong in, but my room is like a hatbox. It must have been an alcove off the big room that's next me, I think. There is one clear-glass window and then a big half-moon one of colored glass, high up, that can't be opened. It does lovely things to my complexion."

"Does the clear one let you see anything?" Sabra asked and learned that it looked down the street. "Oh, you're fortunate," she said, thinking of her own outlook. She told them about her red blanket.

"I bet in another week we won't know whether our blankets are red or purple." It was a short freckle-faced girl who said that, and she began to hum unmusically, "There's a long, long trail a-winding . . ." her blue eyes looking back and forth over the class meanwhile, a little speculative.

"Thought we came here expecting to work, Madge," the girl next her said, already on a first-name basis, Sabra noticed.

Their chatter broke off abruptly as the doors swung open and a nurse in white crossed the room swiftly to stand before them.

"You look so terrified I'll say 'hello' this time," she said cheerfully. "I am Miss Wilbur, one of your instructors." She glanced at those who were still standing. "Will you be seated, please?"

When the room was quiet again she went on. "After this, however, we must be more formal. You are coming into an environment which I imagine is strange to all of you. The environment

of a hospital. You must learn to see it from two points of view. The point of view of the nurse and the point of view of the patient.

"As nurses, there are rules which we must follow at all times. I shall discuss them briefly. Try to remember them. For the first three months of your work here you are known to the staff as probationers. A probationer always rises when a nurse who is her senior approaches. Always. Anywhere in the hospital, except in a classroom when an instructor is present. She always rises when addressed by a nurse who is her senior, whether there is an instructor present or not. These rules apply to all nurses, of whatever rank, as well as to probationers. When the nurse rises she stands quietly with her feet together, her hands at her sides, her head up, her attention alert. Like this. Look and feel as if you were 'on the job' and that you like being 'on the job.'" (Can I ever look as alert as that? Sabra asked herself.)

"Remember at all times," Miss Wilbur continued, "that you are in a hospital and that the hospital is maintained for the benefit of sick people. Learn how to move smoothly and swiftly and quietly, how to speak quietly and yet very distinctly. Practice both of these things every opportunity you have until you have mastered them. Listen to your own voice. Decide if it is as pleasant as you can make it, as smooth, as definite, as quiet. Listen to your own footsteps. See if they are as smooth and as quiet as you can make them. Never tiptoe. Learn

to walk quietly. It is possible to be very noisy even with rubber heels. Listen."

She walked across the room, clapping the ball of her foot at each step, and smiled back at them. Then she swung around and came back again noiselessly. "It may take a good deal of practice. The stride swings from the hips, with the knees relaxed. It must be learned."

Goodness, how clipped she is! Sabra thought, watching the shrewd gray eyes beneath the instructor's dark hair and white cap.

"Now there is the matter of precedence," Miss Wilbur was saying. "In the hospital a nurse always permits a doctor to precede her through a doorway, into or out of elevators, and so on. This kind of precedence is effective all the way down the line. The superintendent of nurses, of course, has precedence over all other nurses in the hospital. Nurses on the instructing staff have precedence over graduate nurses on the nursing staff. Nurses in white—graduate nurses—precede nurses in blue and white, that is, student nurses. Cap nurses precede probationers."

"Why don't *we*——" The murmur died away, its question unformed.

"Probationers do not wear caps." Miss Wilbur knew what the question would have been. "If you are accepted as a member of the training school in the junior-nurse class you will be permitted to wear a cap. The probationary period is just that—probation. During it you must prove yourselves

qualified to be nurses. Qualified first of all in health, then in your personal behavior and conduct, qualified in your class work, and qualified in the practice of your duties as nurses."

Three or four of her audience sighed audibly, and as she watched Miss Wilbur Sabra was reminded of the way Miss MacLaren had stopped a smile the other day. They can't be very sure of us, she thought, and saw Miss Wilbur's eyes on her. Goodness, she knows I was wool-gathering.

But the moment's pause was gone, and Miss Wilbur was telling them that they would have no classes except in nursing practice for the first month. Then classes in theory would begin. But that was all that could be said about classes today, for she must assign them to groups in order that they might report to the sewing room for their uniforms to be fitted.

"You will find that your uniforms are partly made, according to the measurements you sent in. The required payment for uniforms must be completed at the business office, which is on the first floor, Randolph, before you report to the sewing room, which is in basement front, Macey. Your uniforms will be ready for you sometime tomorrow afternoon. The head of the sewing room will tell you when to report for them."

Miss Wilbur took a large sheet of paper from the drawer of the classroom desk, ran her eye down it, and glanced over the room. "The following probationers will report at three forty-five

today for fittings." She read a list of names. "And these will report at four-fifteen today." She put the list back into the drawer and closed it.

"Saturday morning you will report for duty at seven o'clock in this room. You will report in uniform wearing plain white shoes, low-heeled, oxford type, with plain laces. You will wear white stockings with no repairs or need for repairs in evidence. No jewelry of any sort may be worn with the Randolph-Macey uniform until you are a graduate of the training school. You will then be allowed to wear your hospital pin. Wrist watches may not be worn by probationers. You must have a watch, however, at all times. This must be equipped with a radiolite dial and be easy to read. It must be carried either in your uniform pocket, which is below the belt on the right, or pinned to your uniform, underneath the bib of your apron. This latter place is usually safer and easier to get at. A pin in the hospital, by the way, is always a *safety* pin. Always." She showed them a good type of watch to have. "Three-fifty at the corner drug store."

The class took a moment to examine the watch, make note of its manufacturer, and settled back again.

"As to uniforms," Miss Wilbur said, "you will have eight aprons and three blue uniforms with the necessary white collars and cuffs, which are held in place with studs. Only the studs furnished may be used. You may purchase more uniforms from the sewing room if you wish. This number

is considered sufficient for a student nurse during the probationary period."

She told them then about laundry. How it must be prepared, where it must be taken, when it could be got, and Sabra controlled a smile of her own as she realized at last the reason for so many laundry bags made of washable white cotton which the bulletin stipulated. Evidently each nurse must be her own laundryman and both take her clothes to the hospital laundry and go after them when they were finished.

Then Miss Wilbur came back again to the matter of time. They were to set their watches by the Western Union clock in Macey Entrance. Absolute promptness was expected on all occasions. "No exceptions are made to this rule."

Saturday morning they would make a complete tour of the hospital, she said. "After that we will begin practical instruction here." Miss Wilbur paused and breathed a short sigh of relief. Just as I used to do in school, Sabra thought, when I'd finished reciting some memory work.

The probationers were looking at their instructor with vague but friendly understanding as she stood surveying them. "Now *I* have a lesson," she said with a hint of a smile. "Will each of you answer 'Yes, present,' if I call your name and pronounce it correctly. Just remain as you are."

They looked at her in growing amazement as she called one name after another, her keen eyes darting to the section of the room from which

each "Yes, present" came. For Miss Wilbur was telling off the entire list of twenty full names without the help of a record of any sort, and she did not miss one. Midway of the roll one girl said, "No, present," and everybody laughed, including Miss Wilbur. This girl said her name was Spanish. It was pronounced *Beeyohnka Laraydo*, not *Bee-yanka Lareedo*.

"Gee!" one probationer whispered admiringly when the roll call was completed. If Miss Wilbur heard the whisper she gave no sign, but Sabra was sure she must have heard it. It would not be pleasant, Sabra thought, to hear that sort of comment made of a task one should perform correctly. She was certain that she was going to like working under Miss Wilbur's direction. The instructor's crisp, cheerful sureness was very stimulating.

"Are there any questions?" Miss Wilbur asked.

"Yes, I'd like to ask . . ." The girl hesitated as the others turned toward her.

There was a whispered "Stand up!"

She got to her feet in some embarrassment and went on. "I'd like to know how many hours we're supposed to work here?"

"As student nurses, you come under the state law regarding the employment of women," Miss Wilbur replied. "Your hours on duty in the wards are therefore limited to eight hours a day. Your classes will be in addition to that."

"Wow! Eight hours *and* classes?"

Miss Wilbur's expression hardened. "Is this the

first thought you have given to what might be expected of you, Miss Lennox?"

"I guess it is." Miss Lennox sat down as swiftly as she had risen, both movements suggesting that someone had touched a mechanical control in which the tension was too tight.

"Your home is——?"

"On a sheep ranch in Nevada."

"That is a long way to have come if there was any uncertainty in your mind."

On her feet once more, Miss Lennox' face had changed. "I'm bobbin' up an' down like a jack-in-the-box, I guess. But my *mind's* made up. I know that much. I'm here for keeps, if they'll have me."

There was such a ring of conviction in her voice that Sabra could not help turning to look at her. What would Miss Wilbur say now?

"Then perhaps, Miss Lennox"—the instructor's tone was quiet and kindly, with something very firm behind it—"then perhaps we should begin at once making an attempt to get into harmony with this new environment. A nurse's first duty will always be to serve."

"Yes, I read that in the bulletin. But I'm going into it to make my living too. I wasn't aiming to work for glory. Eight hours a day and classes—whoof!" The way in which she sat down this time added its own emphasis.

Miss Wilbur studied a small note pad she had put on the desk. The girls in the front row looked

studiously at the floor. One or two in the rear giggled.

"I must remind you, Miss Lennox——" Miss Wilbur stopped abruptly as the door opened and a nurse in white came into the room.

"Miss MacLaren?" the instructor said with that same quiet, courteous tone which Sabra Dunning was already beginning to see would need more than practice to acquire. It had sincerity behind it too. It was a greeting, but it conveyed unmistakably Miss Wilbur's readiness to do whatever Miss MacLaren asked of her.

"How soon shall you be finished here, Miss Wilbur?"

"At half-past three, Miss MacLaren."

"Gosh!" Madge Lennox remarked in an undertone. "That's the Head!"

Miss MacLaren turned an icy glance in her direction.

"Miss Lennox, there is something I wish to discuss with you. I will see you in my office at three thirty-five today."

"Yes'm. I think I can make it." Miss Lennox was amazed once more that her name had been remembered and correctly placed. Her train had brought her here only barely in time to attend the class, and the superintendent of nurses had not been in her office. A secretary had hurried the girl to class, after a brief set of instructions. Miss Lennox was deciding that the photograph she had sent

in with her application must resemble her more closely than she had thought.

The voice of the superintendent of nurses came again, coldly.

"Miss Lennox"—not a sound, not a movement in the entire group—"will you rise, Miss Lennox? You will report to my office at three thirty-five today."

"Yes. All right, Miss——" She hesitated, apparently unable in her confusion to recall the superintendent's name, and sat down.

Miss MacLaren looked at her an instant and turned to Miss Wilbur. "I find a change necessary. I am sorry to interrupt you." She turned to the class again. "Miss Dunning?"

Sabra rose quietly.

"Yes, Miss MacLaren?" Sabra knew quite well that her own correctness had been schooled by Miss Lennox' failure.

"It is necessary to change the room assigned to you, Miss Dunning. Has your trunk arrived?"

"No, Miss MacLaren."

"You will be in Room 10, House 16, at the upper end of the block. The porter will see that your trunk reaches you. You will move this evening before ten o'clock."

"Yes, Miss MacLaren." Sabra waited an instant, saw Miss MacLaren's barely perceptible nod of dismissal, and sat down.

"Miss Lennox."

Miss Lennox arose quickly and more quietly

than before, her hands gripping her purse so hard that her knuckles showed white. "Yes, Miss MacLaren?"

"You will move to House 22, Room C, on the second floor." It was the room Sabra had been assigned to first.

"Yes, Miss MacLaren."

"Your cases have been delivered, I believe. You may telephone the porter to change them for you. You will move before ten o'clock this evening."

"Yes, Miss MacLaren."

"I am relieved to note that you do learn from observation, Miss Lennox."

"I guess it looks like I don't think very fast. But I'll learn, Miss MacLaren." There was an attempt at courtesy showing through the explanation. She sat down.

Miss MacLaren spoke again in an undertone to Miss Wilbur and left the room. Miss Wilbur glanced over some notes on her pad, looking a little annoyed.

"I hope," she said at last, "I hope that you all realize the importance of making a good start, making the right impression, the impression that you want to make. Perhaps I should say, rather, avoid making an unfavorable impression. When a student nurse fails to remember the few very simple, but, nevertheless, quite inflexible rules I outlined just a moment ago as the rules of this training school, she does make a very bad impression. To say that one thinks slowly is a poor excuse

to offer in a hospital where one of the first needs is always to think quickly. Respect for others is essential to self-respect, you know. Respect for orders is necessary if they are to be carried out. Respect for authority is essential if anything is to be achieved in a hospital.

"Let me urge you to think of this seriously. There are always more applicants for admission to the training school than we can possibly accept. You are entering the profession which probably makes the heaviest demands of all professions which women enter. It will be impossible to have any degree of success in this school if your efforts are laid on a basis of discourtesy, careless habits of thought and speech, disorderly personal habits. I say this in all seriousness. Please think it over.

"You will report as directed for your uniforms to be fitted and for instruction in this room at 7 A.M. Saturday. Until then, unless you are otherwise notified before four o'clock today, your time is your own.

"Beginning at seven on Saturday, however, you must comply with training-school rules and be in your rooms by 10 P.M., unless you are on duty. One night each week, unless the privilege is denied for cause, you will be granted what we call a 'late pass,' which permits you to stay out until twelve midnight."

All student nurses, she said, regardless of how long they had been in training, must request a late pass at the office of the superintendent of nurses.

The request should be made several days in advance of the night for which it was desired, if possible. This was possible, she said, only when a nurse knew what would be her duty schedule for the week, which was not always the case. A record of late passes granted was in the hands of the clerk at the main desk in Macey each night. On her return at or before midnight the student nurse must report to this clerk and see that her return was recorded. She must report in person. "She may not telephone in that she has returned. A watchman will then go with her to her house door and unlock it for her. This procedure is never varied. If you are later than twelve midnight you must report first to the night superintendent of nurses. But it is exceedingly wise never to be late. All house doors are locked at 10 P.M. Nurses are not permitted to have keys."

The class controlled itself with some effort. The glamour which had always been associated in their minds with the profession of nursing was rapidly giving way to what seemed to be somewhat bleak reality. They were required to sleep at the Nurses' Home each night, Miss Wilbur was saying. Therefore, they would generally breakfast in the training-school dining room on Macey Fourth. If their schedules permitted they might eat lunch or dinner where they wished, but it was very unwise to be running out for these meals too frequently. Meals were served in the dining room on two schedules, known as first serving and second

serving. First servings were at 6:30 A.M., twelve noon, 5:30 P.M., and for night-duty nurses at twelve midnight. Second serving was one half hour later in each case.

"Probationers may report to first servings only, unless specifically ordered to report for second service." They must use Macey Entrance when approaching the dining room. Unless they were on duty in Randolph, they must never go to the dining room via Randolph floors, which they might be tempted to do if they lived up the hill, because Randolph Entrance was nearest. "The probationers' table is the long one at the end of the dining room. You may not sit elsewhere. You may not enter the dining room in street clothes. You may enter it only in uniform. This rule is waived for tonight and tomorrow morning and tomorrow lunch because your uniforms will not be ready. Thereafter it will never be waived while you are probationers."

"Well, Madge, we c'n eat tonight, anyway. I was afraid we wouldn't be able to!" It was an audible whisper which filled Miss Wilbur's pause.

"Which reminds me"—Miss Wilbur made use of the comment—"while on duty student nurses never address another nurse by her given name. Always it is Miss Smith, Miss Jones—even in stage whispers during class," she added with a sharp look directed at the rear of the group. But there was tolerance and understanding behind it, Sabra noticed.

"Are there any questions?" Miss Wilbur asked. There were none, apparently. "That is all for today. You are dismissed." She gave them a quick smile, which reassured and warmed every single one of them, and went swiftly from the room.

"She sure can walk fast, can't she?" Madge Lennox stood up and wriggled her shoulders. "And talk fast too. You will and you may and you must. Well, fellow sufferers, how does my collar look? I managed to get called down by the Head the first day, as usual. Hmmm—there's a long, long trail a-winding—— What're we waiting for? An encore?"

CHAPTER IV

AS THE probationer class moved in a group toward the doors at the end of their first session under Miss Wilbur, Madge Lennox worked her way among them until she had reached Sabra Dunning's side. "You saved the day for us," she told Sabra. "I don't see how you caught on so fast."

"You couldn't see my knees knocking," Sabra replied, exaggerating the truth a trifle. There was something likable about this freckle-faced girl with the clear blue eyes, Sabra thought. Something full of freshness and honesty.

"It wasn't nervousness that got me down," Miss Lennox said. "But I can see I'm just plain backwoods in a place like this. I've got a lot to learn. I don't belong—yet."

"Don't be foolish," Sabra said.

"I should say not!" Bianca Laredo leaned to agree with her. "None of us belongs, as you put it." She drew a long breath. "It's certainly unlike any other school I ever attended."

"I've lived among ranch hands most of my life, I guess," Miss Lennox said. "But we Lennoxes get along. I'll get along too." She drew back from the rest as most of them started for the corridor, but Sabra flapped a glove at her.

"Come on, Miss Lennox. I'm a farmer, too, but we can't be big bad sheepherders here—and you've got a date with Miss MacLaren at three thirty-five. Don't be late, now, and give us our first black mark."

"Oh, my gosh! I'd forgotten!" She was about to rush past them, her arm extended to open the door, when she slowed to let them proceed as they were, face flushing. "First flip of the polishing rag," she blurted out.

"Run, silly!" Sabra gave her a little push. "Forget yourself now. Watch Miss MacLaren's eyes; they're interesting."

Madge Lennox' murmured thanks came back to them barely a whisper in the hospital corridor. Her adjustment to her environment had begun.

Bianca Laredo walked beside Sabra as they left the business office. She was glad they were going to be in the same house, she said. Sabra asked if Room 10 was an alcove too. But Miss Laredo shook her head. "I'm afraid you'll wish it had been." There was no time to say more, for they had arrived at the elevators. They more than filled the cage, and several backed out to go down the steps to the lower level.

The Filipino operator grinned knowingly at those inside as he closed the door.

"The basement, please," Miss Laredo said.

"Oh! Get uniforms!" He grinned again. "You go round there." He pointed as he opened the door for them.

They stepped into a narrow basement corridor, along the dim sides of which were ranged an endless row of wheel chairs and gurneys, or wheel stretchers. A man in white was stretched out on one of the latter, his head resting on his folded arms, sound asleep.

"That may be worth remembering," one of the girls remarked.

They turned down another corridor, somewhat wider than the first, which ended in a doorway opening on the street. The door was clamped open, and an old man in a gray uniform was sitting there on a stool. "That's Barclay Street," someone said. "We can go out that way, I think."

The sewing room was halfway down this corridor. The door of the place was in two sections, the upper one of which was open. A tired-looking woman greeted them over a counter attached to the lower part of the door.

"You can come right on in," she said. "We want to turn up your hems. You'll have to take your dresses off. You can hang 'em on those hooks." She disappeared into an adjoining room and returned with her arms full of partly made blue uniforms. "Now we'll see how careful you took

the measurements you sent in." She laughed dryly. "Which is Miss Stone?"

"I am," one of them said, stepping forward.

"I should've been able to pick you out, shouldn't I? Do you think you're big enough to ever be a nurse? I'd say you'd have to stand on a box to make a bed."

The girl smiled. "I've lots of determination, though," she said. "That will make up for what I lack in inches."

"Well, you'll make a cute one, anyway, I'll say."

"I'm not interested in being cute." The girl's smile stiffened.

"You might as well be." The woman began pinning deftly, to fit the shoulders. "There. Now get up on that marker stand, and I'll turn the hem." She marked the blue chambray quickly with white chalk around the adjustable rim of the stand. "Every one of your uniforms has to be just so many inches from the floor," she said, speaking to all of them, her head bent as she dabbed with the chalk. "That's so's you'll look all right when you stand together."

The hems done, she brought a pile of partly finished aprons, and the bib of one of them was fitted so that its long wide shoulder straps crossed Miss Stone's back smoothly. The fitter made dots with her pencil to indicate where the eyelets for studs should be placed. "Now, while I hold it you see if you can raise your arms and shoulders easy.

"They can make you mighty tired if they're too tight."

"They feel all right."

"Then I guess they are. You can get your uniforms at three tomorrow. You get your cuffs and collars and studs from Miss Brewster in the store-room."

She called for Miss Laredo next and looked her over speculatively as she held out the uniform. "I was wonderin' when I seen your name if you belong to the colonel's family," she said, plainly expecting confirmation or denial. "The one that's out at the fort here, I mean."

"Do you think any family would own me, dressed up like this?" The girl indicated the trailing blue chambray, her face slightly flushed.

"I bet your uniform's better set right before he would," the fitter said, reassured but not satisfied. "He a relative of yours?"

"No fair!" Miss Laredo said under her breath. "I come from South America," she said after a moment, "and I'll surely have to have my apron straps looser than that if I'm ever to turn a mat-tress." It was clear that Miss Laredo wished to avoid talking about herself. The fitter seemed to be much impressed by the fact that Miss Laredo had come from another country. "You talk very good United States," she said, doing her bit for the foreigner's reassurance.

Sabra was standing facing this tall dark girl who was taller than ever now, on the marking

stand again, and she saw the amused twinkle in her dark eyes and the smile twitching almost out of control on her mouth. "And now," Sabra said, "you've got to learn a lot of new phrases—basement front, Macey, Macey Fourth, Randolph Second, late pass, and goodness knows how many more."

"Saved!" Bianca's undertone acknowledged her assistance. And she added, so that the others could hear, "I suppose we'll get used to those expressions fast enough."

"You'd better," the fitter said, giving the chambray a little jerk to tell her to get down. She called for Sabra next and remarked with satisfaction, "You two will be able to borrow each other's uniforms. You're about of a size." And when they only smiled, she went on: "Oh, you'll need to, all right. There's never enough uniforms. Some of the girls get five. You have to pay extra. You get hot and messy workin' in the wards. You'll see. You'll be glad to be able to borrow one sometime. I always tell the girls who else is about their size."

As she finished with each of them she said that the uniforms would be ready tomorrow at three and added, "You get your collars and cuffs and studs from Miss Brewster in the storeroom," as if she had not already said that at least a dozen times.

It was part of the routine, Sabra decided. No one seemed to feel they could be counted upon yet. Everything was said to them in such elaborate detail and with such endless repetition. It gave her

a disturbing feeling of uncertainty. For the past two months, since her father's death, she had been obliged to assume such unaccustomed responsibilities that she had come to feel very mature. Curious, how something that hurts can make you grow up all at once, she thought. There's an isolating quality about a personal disaster. It sets everything off from you, so you can see what you are and what you aren't.

She had been so sure in her choice of this profession. She had been confident that no one had ever thought more carefully before making her decision. She and her father, who were always inclined to talk things over thoroughly and frankly, had held one of their most serious conferences about it. She knew exactly to what use she would put her training, and she knew she would never lose sight of her purpose in coming here.

But the clipped, impersonal tap-tap-tap of details in Miss Wilbur's talk to the class had left her feeling a little as if she must learn all about everything all over again. The matter of precedence, for instance, seemed just simple courtesy. The matter of being on time, of keeping regular hours, seemed just necessary common sense. She noticed Miss Laredo's well-bred face and carriage as she and Miss Laredo walked up the hill after leaving the sewing room, and a faint glimmering of understanding crossed her thoughts. Perhaps all of what Miss Wilbur had said could be summed up in a single phrase—it was self-discipline. Miss Laredo,

for instance, had possessed that sort of self-discipline before she ever heard of Randolph-Macey, Sabra was sure. She knew she herself had a good deal of it. But a girl like Miss Lennox, now, for all her straightforwardness and evident blunt honesty and pluck, obviously did not know yet how to conduct herself here.

If they have the same rules for all of us, Sabra concluded her little wordless discussion, they won't have to be thinking about us as individuals. It's sound common sense. They will know we'll all behave the same way under the same circumstances, and they can count on us—eventually—in emergencies. She frowned slightly at the lock step that suggested, but then she smiled. Common sense is no lock step. It's much too hard to come by.

They had arrived at their house, and Miss Laredo said, "Come in and see my hatbox. Since we're so near of a size you may want to borrow it sometime." The door to Sabra's Number 10 was less than three feet from her own.

"Goodness! It's lucky you're slim!" Sabra exclaimed when Bianca had opened the door.

"Mmmm. But there won't be much time to sit and think about it—not with eight hours a day *and* classes. Wait till you see what you've got."

"Oh, is it awful?" Sabra asked. "The one I'm in is as bleak as a dock when the tide's out."

"It may be bleak, but it won't be lonely," Miss Laredo told her.

When Sabra came out of the "hatbox" she

found the door of Room 10 wide open, though it was on the main floor of the house and not ten feet from the double street door, with its purple and blue and green glass, through which the fading sun painted a splotch of color on the bare floor of the foyer as if a child had spilled his paint pots there.

She hesitated, looking down the room. There were four beds on one side, with a white, narrow chest of drawers at the head of each, and two beds against the opposite wall on either side of a small fireplace, whose grate was filled to the brim with trash. There was a chest for each of these beds too.

A tousled girl in a dressing gown was standing before one of the chests in the long row, gazing disconsolately into the mirror above it and making half-hearted sweeps at her hair with a comb. Two of the six beds were occupied.

Sabra tapped lightly on the door casing, and the girl swung around, a comprehending smile slowly crossing her face as Sabra spoke.

"How do you do?" Sabra said in a low tone, wanting not to waken the sleepers. "I am Sabra Dunning, a probationer. Do you know which bed is to be mine?"

"That's the only one not taken." The girl pointed with her comb to the bed at the left of the fireplace. "Your chest is beyond it. They'll get you a mirror." Her voice was held to a whisper.

"Is there a closet or wardrobe?" There was no sign of one. There was only one door into the room.

"No, nothing but the drawers. You can hook hangers on the head of your bed, if you want to. We all use dress bags. You can get six hangers in them. If you have a steamer trunk you can keep it under the bed, but not your suitcase." She turned back to her hair, glancing at her watch as she did so.

"Streeter! Markey! Hey, you girls!" She raised her voice considerably for this.

"Oh, do hush!" came from out of the covers of the farthest bed.

"Streeter! Come on, Markey," the other insisted.

"Keep still, Lacey! Can't you let us sleep?"

"You'd better wake up. You've got about fifteen minutes if you're on at five-thirty."

"I just barely got to sleep!" One of the girls sat up. "It's a swell life if you don't waken! Come on, Enid, get out of that bed." She looked across at Sabra, blinking. "Oh, I didn't know anyone else was here."

"Just a very new probationer," Sabra said.

"Say prob, not probationer. You won't feel so new. Welcome home. Home's what you make it, remember."

The girl at the glass turned. "This is Nan Streeter, Miss—I've forgotten your name. I was too sleepy to hear it, I'm afraid, when you came in."

"Sabra Dunning."

"Miss Dunning. And the other one is Enid Markey. I'm Esther Lacey. We're all juniors in this room but you and Janet Borland. She's on night

duty, but this was her night off. She's downtown. That's her bed across the fireplace from you. She's a senior—but she's a good sleeper. You have to be, with Men's Medical to think about."

"I'll do my best," Sabra said.

Miss Markey went off down the hall, and Nan Streeter sagged back on her bed. "Nobody cares what you do over here," she said. "We're off duty here. You can do anything but sleep. If anyone catches you sleeping they pinch you right away. It isn't done."

"Where is the bathroom?" Sabra asked.

"Down the hall and to the left." There were only two baths in the house and one little wash room, she said. And there were sixteen nurses in the house. "It's very convenient. If you want a bath you have to get it between 2 and 3 A.M., and if you want to wash before you go on duty you'd better do it yesterday." There was a proper technique, Sabra was told soberly. If she heard the water running in the tub she should run and jump in. "You can get your things off afterward. Wash while the water's hot is our motto."

The only other thing to do, according to Enid Markey, who returned just then, was to join the endless chain at the end of the hall and keep one hand on the bathroom door while the girl ahead bathed. "I've got to wait right now. I can't wash my face until after I've got my uni on, and I bet I splash it."

"It sounds—but perhaps you are joking?"

Sabra's eyebrows had a funny quirk in them.

Miss Markey smiled and looked at her across the bed she was making.

Miss Lacey spoke again, sharply, "Get out of there, Nan! You're going to be late!"

Sabra watched Miss Streeter ooze over the side of her bed, into her slippers and dressing gown, and out of the room, all in what appeared to be a single movement. She was back shortly, making up her bed with a couple of sweeps and reaching for underwear neatly arranged across the iron rail at the head of it. "The wash room's empty, Markey," she said, pulling on her stockings. She rolled the tops of them swiftly over round garters below her knees, ran a finger around inside each, her left hand picking up a one-piece undergarment even as the right finished with the garter.

The left foot poked through the undergarment, then the right, and she stood up, slipping off her dressing gown, pulling her nightgown over her head, while her feet felt for shoes. Her thumbs hoisted and fitted shoulder straps of her underwear into place as she sat down on the edge of the bed to tie her shoe laces. She caught Sabra watching her as the blue uniform, with its detachable collar and cuffs, went on next over her slim, straight body, and as she buttoned it she said, "You remind me of the way I felt the first time I saw this room. I thought it was a joke being played on me because I was new. There was a girl asleep in every bed but one."

She opened a drawer, lifted out a white rectangle which proved to be an apron, jabbed two studs into one end of the belt and two others in a short way from the ends of it, flipped the broad straps over her shoulders, crossing them, and turned to her mirror, both hands busy at her belt.

Sabra saw the quick lift of each shoulder, separately, and noted that the apron belt stayed where it belonged.

Enid Markey came back as swiftly as she had left, flicked a towel around her shoulders, and brushed her dark curly hair into complete orderliness before she put on her cap. That done, she slipped the towel off, folding it as it came, to put it in the drawer again. Her head up, her shoulders squared, her eyes sober, as Sabra could see in the mirror, she stood fastening her apron. Then she got a fresh handkerchief from one of the narrow drawers and put it in her uniform pocket, beneath the apron. She pinned her watch underneath the bib of her apron, on the left, and smiled across at Sabra. "All I can say is get disillusioned as quickly as possible and save yourself whatever you can in the process. It can be pretty ghastly."

"I'll try," Sabra said. "I think I'm going to like it." She watched the quick movements of the other two girls as they put on their caps.

Miss Streeter turned away from her glass and came down the room toward Sabra. Her whole manner had changed. Her face was calm; her eyes met Sabra's directly, impersonally. Even her

voice had lost its personal note when she spoke. "But it's worth it all the day you get your cap," she said. "Then you know you're part of something that has purpose." She went on out and called from the door, "Come on, Markey, if you're coming with me." She glanced back at Sabra. "Good luck, Prob!"

"Thank you!"

"Streeter's being philosophical for your benefit," Miss Lacey remarked. "Don't let her fool you. She gets as down as the rest of us. It bores under the thickest skin at times. Wait till you're on night duty when the others in the house are on day duty and see how much sleep you can get. And watch your face get white and tight and probably splotchy, until you learn to adjust yourself to the food and the hours and the work-work-work. Maybe it's worth it all the day you get your cap, but sometimes I wonder. I wonder a lot." She stopped and put on her apron.

"I'm a cheerful person, don't you think?" she asked after a moment. "I'm not trying to scare you off, but if you think it's all glamour and being nice to people who're ill you're in for a rude awakening. I'm going 'on duty in a few minutes, just at tray time, and there'll be thirty-two patients in the ward and three nurses. The patients doubtless think we're lucky because we can walk around and do things—and we are. You work with Death breathing on the back of your neck half the time, and when you can shove him off and get your

patients on their feet again you feel as if you had the world on a string." She laughed shortly. "You see, it's a great life. One minute you're wondering if you can stand another day of it, because you're so tired you can't see, and then somebody new comes along, and before you know it you're picking out the wonderful part to talk about. I hate it, and I wouldn't quit for ten million."

"Pretty safe sort of hatred," Sabra said.

"Sorry I slopped over." Miss Lacey was fastening her watch. "You looked as if you'd never been tired in your life when you came in that door, and I was half awake. Guess I still am. We three are on crazy hours because of classes. It made me cross to see anyone who isn't tired. Have you had any classes yet?"

"Just one. Miss Wilbur's."

"Hmmm. Like her? She's keen on practice." Miss Lacey was heading for the door.

"She's very stimulating," Sabra replied.

Esther Lacey shot a quick appraising look at her and laughed. "She'll run you positively ragged!" Then there was only the rapid, soft flutter of her apron as she crossed the foyer to the gaudy door.

Alone in the big room, Sabra sat there on her own bed, staring at the five others with their taut spreads, their pillows placed with almost mathematical accuracy, equally distant from either side. The chests, with their white covers and their drawers all primly closed. The dress bags hooked

on the rails at the bed heads were closed and orderly, too, for all their queer look. Even the steamer trunks under three of the beds had their edges neatly squared with the bed frame.

This floor was painted gray, too, and there were the same dingy curtains at the two windows. But you could see something from these windows. The house was so high on the hill that there was an extensive view down the lower slope, which was massed solid with roofs, it seemed, on this side of the street. Across, there was the austere white pile of Randolph, with the lower, more homely, less interesting red pile of Macey below it.

In spite of all she could do to prevent it, came the picture of her own room at home. It was in the east wing of the rambling one-story ranch house and had windows to the rising sun and to the north and to the south. Northward there were hills, and to the south lay the spread of the valley. Eastward climbed the orchard to catch all the growing light of spring—to hold all the waning light of autumn. Warm, mellow colors were through those windows always, while here—well, perhaps she could get used to the gray geometry of city roofs. She must get used to them.

But this room itself—and that room at home! She could see her low four-poster bed of old carved walnut, her chest of drawers, her dressing table with its triple mirror, her desk—even her tiny night table beside her bed seemed the most flagrant of luxuries now. She had never thought

before how much difference a soft-toned thick rug could make in a room, a book laid down somewhere, to be read again, a copper bowl of poppies.

And Shane. Shane was everywhere in the house at once, it seemed to her now. Shane with his cold nose thrusting into one's hand for attention, the thump of Shane's tail on the floor in response to someone's approach, the loud, rich, chesty ring of his bark on the terrace when the gate was opened down the road.

I've got to stop *thinking* about it! she told herself sharply. The training school isn't like that. It couldn't possibly be like that. I mustn't forget again.

She tried out the bed and discovered that by sitting up in it she would be able to see out one window. That might help times when she could not sleep, if there were to be such times. They seemed to be a common experience, if she could believe her room-mates.

"Imagine six people in one room!" she said aloud. "And on duty at different hours! How does anyone on night duty sleep at all, I wonder?" She looked about for matches to light the pile of trash in the grate. That was one thing which need not stay as it was. But she could find no matches, and she made a mental note to get some when she went to buy the drinking glass she would need. She swung quickly at Miss Laredo's tap on the door.

"Are you going over to supper?" Bianca asked.

"No. I'd almost forgotten it! I have a dinner engagement, too, and I've been sitting here staring at—at everything. My trunk hasn't come, and my bag's still in my other room. I'd better go after that myself, I suppose." It was late now to be calling a porter, she thought.

"We're funny, aren't we?" Miss Laredo asked. "Not a single one of us except Miss Lennox and that other girl who apparently knows her is going to eat at the hospital tonight. You'd think we were afraid to."

"Well, I am afraid to," Sabra admitted. "I'm literally scared to death, if you want to know. But I'm ever so interested, at the same time. I don't know what it does to you. Have you talked with any nurses yet—any juniors, I mean, or student nurses?"

"No—just Miss Wilbur and Miss MacLaren."

"My room-mates, three of them at least, were here when I came in. They had to go on duty, and I had nothing to do but watch, so I watched with both eyes, and I can't tell you how it makes me feel. They're as human as your own family when they're grouching about having to get out of bed, and they're as—as impersonal as lamp-posts when they're ready to go *on*, as they call it. They can get dressed in two shakes—and d'you know, they don't wear a single stitch that isn't necessary? No slips at all! Just a combination and uniform and apron and stockings and shoes!"

"You're good for what's ailing me," Miss La-

redo said. "I'll help you bring up your bags, if you'll let me."

Homesick! Sabra thought, drawing her own conclusions as they went out, just as I am, and we'd both better get over it—fast.

CHAPTER V

IT WAS nearly a quarter of six. The first day would soon be over. Sabra had emptied the two bags which she and Miss Laredo had carried up from Room C, and she was wondering what she was supposed to do with the bags themselves. There was certainly no place here to put them. She was trying unsuccessfully to put one inside the other when a junior nurse whom she had not seen before came in and flung a heavy dark blue book on the first bed.

"Hello," the girl said half-heartedly. "You're one of the new students, I suppose."

"Yes," Sabra said, "so new I don't know what to do with these bags."

"Basement. The narrow door at the back of the hall. The light has a pull string."

"Thank you. I am Sabra Dunning. I've been assigned to this bed."

"Don't let anyone catch you sleeping in it," the junior advised glumly. "I hope you're not subject

to colds. There's a draft from the chimney. We had a piece of cardboard to close it off with, but somebody snitched it. I've just come from Materia Medica class, and I feel about as sociable as a cactus."

Sabra chuckled as she went out with a bag in either hand to take them to the basement. One thing seemed to be characteristic of these junior nurses, if you asked them for information. They gave you all of it with a brevity which was very stark. "Basement," she quoted. "The narrow door at the back of the hall. The light has a pull string."

Feeling as sociable as a cactus couldn't be very comfortable. So the fireplace caused a draft, did it? She would have to see about getting another piece of cardboard. She wondered if the draft had anything to do with the trash which had been allowed to accumulate there. Well, a match would clear that up soon enough. Perhaps the maid would take care of it in the morning, though it seemed unlikely that a single day could have harvested such a pile of papers. There were more than would collect at the ranch in a week.

Squinting in the dark stair well, she finally found the pull string for the light and went on down the steep stairs. The basement room was large and clean and orderly. There were trunks and bags ranged around the walls in a solid line, the bags on top of the trunks. Trunks of all sorts—even a very old-looking tin one—and bags of all sorts, from cowhide that looked much traveled

down to a modern striped wardrobe case which looked so new that its journey here must have been its first. There were several hatboxes, their shining drum shapes catching the gleam of the light. Had all their owners been homesick here at first? What speculation a roomful of other people's baggage could arouse! Sabra put her two cases at the end of the line on the far side of the room, where her trunk could stand when it was unpacked, and went back up the narrow stairs, thinking that she had brought several things in that trunk which she would have no place for.

As she reached for the light string again she heard a telephone ringing and, coming out into the hall, saw a girl dart across the foyer in blue, without collar or cuffs or apron or cap.

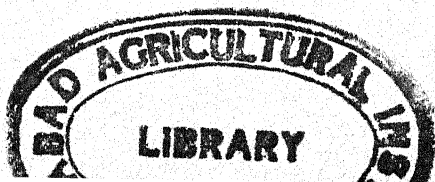
"Hold the line, please," Sabra heard her say, and then: "Miss Dunning! Telephone! Is there a Miss Dunning here?"

"Coming," Sabra said, walking faster, wishing the girl wouldn't shout so. "I'm Miss Dunning. Thank you."

"Oh. Well, you're wanted on the phone."

It was Galen. He would come for her at six. "I'll park outside," he said, "and wait in the car." There was a note of apology in his voice as he went on: "Those doorbells always cause such a commotion."

Sabra said she would be ready, but she did not tell him that she was relieved by the arrangement he suggested. She did not want soon again to be



shouted at as she had been just now. I suppose I'll be as bad as anyone in a little while, she thought, going back to the big room with all its beds. But as long as she could avoid it she was never going to yell that way when someone was wanted on the telephone.

During dinner Galen asked what she thought of "it all" now.

Sabra looked at him a moment, her sober face finally crinkling with amusement. "I'll tell you one thing," she said at last, "I've never had to think so fast in all my life."

"Think so fast?"

"Mm-hm. I've been very leisurely about things, I'm afraid. I believe I've just soaked up a good deal of what I know, and soaking takes time. But, my goodness, there certainly isn't going to be any time to soak things up at Randolph-Macey! You snatch it. You snatch it fast. And you learn it the first time—no dawdling to absorb it, if I'm any judge."

"I'll bet I know!" Galen laughed at her. "Some whitecap came along and you forgot to salaam."

"You were peeking."

"Somebody always forgets. You can spot 'em a block away afterward. They're always bobbing up and down."

"Whitecap, eh?" Sabra did not disillusion him. "But whitecaps come only on a stormy sea, I thought."

"Oh no. Only a few of these whitecaps are

stormy. They're a good lot on the whole. A couple of crusaders, one or two termagants, a few mousies—but on the whole they're a fine staff."

"Service," Sabra said, looking at him.

Galen Trent returned the look, controlling a smile. "You must have heard a doctor shouting for something too."

"No, I haven't. Do they?"

But he would not answer her. He said that would be telling tales out of school.

It seemed very strange to Sabra, well before ten o'clock, to return to that chill barracks of a room. Miss Markey and Miss Streeter were asleep in the second and third beds. On the first bed lay the girl whose name she did not know. She was propped on one elbow above a dark blue textbook, apparently the one she had brought in this afternoon. The bed across from Sabra's, on the other side of the fireplace, had apparently just been vacated.

The girl with the book glanced up as Sabra went down to her own bed. She lifted her head off her hand and made a slight gesture of greeting, but her eyes were sulky as she spoke. "Hello," a murmured word. "I'm Anna Webber. I don't think I told you this afternoon. You said you're Miss Dunning, didn't you?"

"Yes—Sabra."

Miss Webber jerked her head toward the sleepers, still whispering. "They couldn't remember your first name. But everybody knows Dunning around here. We've got a textbook by Dunning. Not this

one—worse luck. You know what Dunning's getting at." She gave herself a lengthwise shake which seemed to involve her whole body, heaved a deep sigh, and turned her entire attention to the book again.

Sabra was glad, for she herself had swung around swiftly to fiddle with something in the narrow top drawer, a sudden flood of tears blurring what she saw there. And I'd better know what this Dunning's getting at, she told herself silently. I can't begin sniveling every time I hear his name mentioned.

Undressing rapidly, she took her toilet things and went out into the broad hallway. She had learned that there was no reception room in this house. Nothing but bedrooms. There was no danger of meeting anyone. The hallway was empty of furniture and consequently seemed even wider and longer than it really was. The absence of floor covering made the ceiling appear abnormally high, and the rather nicely proportioned stairway at the far end was lost because nothing seemed to lead to it. It was just there. It might have been a row of ladders, almost as well, Sabra thought. This had been a fairly pleasant house in its day, she imagined, wondering why people always seemed to feel at complete liberty as to what they might do with a house once they got their hands on it.

Reluctant to cover the entire distance and be forced to stand there at the bathroom door with those already there to make a fourth, she loitered

and continued thinking about the house. It had evidently been intended originally as a home for a family of means. Its dimensions were all large. It was spattered with architectural "gimcracks" on the outside, she thought, but little imagination was needed to see a somewhat dignified lady in long skirts coming down that stairway to await guests in the room which now, instead of 1890 furniture, boasted only a row of white iron beds and those stiff little chests of drawers.

"I can't stand here gaping at that stairway as if I were enraptured!" She gave her shoulders a little swing to set herself in motion and went on toward the bathroom. What a curious location for a bathroom. She could have laughed at that idea had it not been for the glum faces of the trio waiting.

None of them spoke to her as she came up. They looked her over more or less thoroughly. Finally one of them went to the foot of the stairway, stood listening a moment, and came plodding back. The huge thick-textiled flowers on her dressing gown seemed to leap ahead of her with each step.

"Good hat!" the girl exclaimed. "I'm not going to stand here all night. She's had ten minutes already." She banged on the bathroom door. "Aren't you through yet? You've been in there an age."

"I'll be right out," came wearily from the other side of the door.

"There are five of us waiting!" the girl outside replied.

Sabra looked around. No, there were only four.

But the girl who had spoken noticed her counting, and a thin smile crossed her mouth. "Miss Garthwaite's waiting in her room," she said. "She's an instructor. We always call her when it's her turn."

Evidently students and staff shared alike in the Nurses' Home, with its crowded rooms and its inconveniences. Sabra wondered how long you were supposed to take for a bath. Ten minutes certainly did not seem very long. You must train yourself to new habits in every connection here, it seemed. It was a little like being in camp, only in camp you did have schedules when there was not enough equipment to go around. Even at worst it would have been an unusual sight to find three people as cross as these three here in any camp she knew about.

"There is no schedule for bathing?" she asked the girl ahead of her.

"No. You couldn't. Your on-and-off time wouldn't let you. Duty hours keep changing all the time on account of classes."

Eight hours *and* classes, Sabra thought with a faint wryness. That could make a good deal of difference in your state of mind, too, she imagined. Perhaps that Miss Lennox saw things more clearly than the rest of them did.

The bathroom door opened, letting out a welter of steam, and the three looked with hardening faces at the girl who came with it. Water was running into the tub.

"I didn't know it was you in there, Borlie!" the

girl who had tried to hurry her said somewhat shamefacedly.

"Oh—that's all right. I guess I deserved it. I was dead on my feet," she said dully, apologetically. "It was my short night last night, and I've spent almost this whole day in the dentist's chair, and I've got to go on again tonight. You shouldn't have teeth in this business. I scrubbed the tub. You won't have to do that before you get in."

"Maybe we're all dead on our feet," the beflowered girl said ungraciously, and the one called Borlie looked at her rather soberly an instant without saying anything.

"Never mind." One of the others relented. "It's a privilege we've all got coming to us once in a while."

The girl called Borlie noticed Sabra standing a little aside, drew the inevitable conclusion—so Sabra thought—smiled briefly and sleepily, and went down the hall and into the big room. Oh, Sabra thought—she must be Miss Borland, who's across the fireplace from me! Now I know all of us. At least I know she scrubs the tub. Don't they all, for goodness' sake?

Beyond the bathroom door the flow of water into the tub increased in fury for a few moments and then dwindled abruptly and stopped.

"Who's in the wash room?" someone asked.

"Delaney," the other girl replied. "She's shampooing her hair. She's on night duty too. She'll be out in a minute." The wash-room door was opened

as she finished speaking, letting out a girl with dark curly hair hanging damply on her towel-covered shoulders. She took a watch from her pocket.

"Twelve minutes," she said cheerfully. "Hope I've got the soap out." She went off up the stairs, rubbing vigorously at her head. Sabra had not seen her before.

There were still only the three of them waiting. "Do we all want a bath?" one of them asked. No one answered for a moment, then Sabra said that if Miss Garthwaite did not want the wash room she would use it.

"She wants a tub," the girl said. "Beat it, here comes another senior!"

Sabra turned toward the wash room—and the stairs—to see a girl in blue uniform coming skipping down, minus cap, apron, and collar and cuffs. There was a towel over her arm, and her hands were filled with toilet things.

"Oh, fine!" the senior said, taking in the situation at a glance. "I just wakened." And she went into the wash room.

"You're out of luck," Sabra was told with finality. "She'll stay there a week." But Sabra could only laugh at the absurdity of it.

Her turn came finally, and she timed herself. "I'm not going to have a lot of them waiting for me to come out," she said to herself, plying the towel briskly. But when she had finished and had scrubbed the tub and basin and was out in the hall

again, it occurred to her that so far all she had done in the way of resolutions was concerned with things she was not going to do. "I'd better be thinking about what I am going to do."

She went into the big room as soundlessly as she could manage with heeled slippers. Miss Webber was asleep with her head on her textbook. Miss Streeter and Miss Markey were both awake now but were still in bed.

"Hello," Miss Markey said, almost inaudibly. "That's Janet Borland across from you. She's going to sleep right up to the last minute."

Miss Borland lifted her head. "I saw you in the tub line," she said.

"I'll be in bed in a second," Sabra said, wishing Miss Borland had not been disturbed.

"Oh—don't hurry. I go on at eleven. I didn't even hear you until Markey mentioned my name. You get so you hear your own name, even in your sleep." It had taken her six weeks, she said, wriggling into a more talkative posture, to break herself of jumping right out of bed and standing at attention if anyone spoke to her. "You'd better watch yourself. Don't let it get you that way. I can say this, though, that if you always come in as quietly you'll be popular with us. But you've got to learn to sleep no matter what goes on."

Sabra got into bed. "I'm a grand sleeper. Good night."

The Streeter girl and Miss Markey settled back to go to sleep again, and Miss Borland got up and

went over to Miss Webber's bed. "Wake up, Webber, and get undressed. You can't stay that way all night." It was the kindly, gentle voice of an older person talking to a child, Sabra thought, hearing it with her eyes closed. Going to sleep with the light on would need practice.

"Webber—come on. Wake up."

"Oh! What? Oh, all right. Thanks, Borlie." Miss Webber rolled over, knocking the heavy textbook to the floor, and sat up, rubbing her eyes. "Good heavens! Is it that late? I haven't got that circulation down at all. Exam tomorrow. I can't get it into my head. I don't see what blood has to move around for anyway. Why can't it lie still and let me sleep?"

"Pipe down, Webber," Miss Streeter said without annoyance.

"Get up and study in the morning," Miss Borland whispered.

But she was dead to the world in the morning, Miss Webber said, beginning to get out of her clothes, her tired eyes watching but hardly noting, Sabra thought, the swiftness with which Miss Borland was getting into uniform. Sabra was finding it not so easy as she had hoped to be a grand sleeper. She saw Miss Webber slump into bed and heard her murmur that she was too tired to wash her face even.

Miss Borland went out, crisply fresh, her white apron fluttering.

At twelve Sabra was wakened by someone whis-

pering. She raised her head and looked around the room, lost for the moment, and faintly apprehensive.

"Hello." It was Miss Lacey's whisper.

"Oh, hello." Sabra lay back, still not fully awake.

Miss Webber sat up, squinting against the light of a low-candle-power globe at the end of the room. "Can't you get in without rousing the whole place?" she demanded.

"Don't crab, Webbie."

"I'm not crabbing. I'm tired as a log. I want to sleep."

"Well, roll over and start then," Miss Lacey told her good-naturedly. "I'm sorry I wakened you."

"Oh—it's all right. D'you have a good time?"

"Yes. But don't let's start talking. I'll tell you tomorrow." Gathering up toilet things, Miss Lacey saved one hand for a bunch of violets. Across the bed ends she saw Sabra's eyes wide open. "Hi," she whispered, moving silently, holding the violets out. "Smell."

Sabra got a deep breath of them gratefully. It helped blur out some of the bleak strangeness of this place.

"Now be a good prob and get to sleep." Miss Lacey went out, and Sabra concentrated on being a good prob.

* * *

When she wakened in the morning the five other beds were flat and smooth. A single glance told her that, and she sat up abruptly. "What time is it, for goodness' sake?" she demanded of the empty room. "Seven o'clock! This will never do!" She had intended to get up at six, even if it was not required of her until tomorrow. One good resolution gone skitwise, she thought, annoyed with herself. At least she had proved that she was a good sleeper. Four separate nurses had been able to get out of bed and dress and go back and forth to the bathroom and make their beds and straighten their chiffoniers and go on duty without her having heard a single sound of any of them.

"I'm too grand a sleeper," she warned herself, having by this time a very hazy remembrance of telling someone that she did not have a class and didn't want breakfast. She wondered if Miss Laredo had kept her resolve. They had both made the same one. After she had dressed and made her bed she tapped on Miss Laredo's door.

"Come in," came sleepily from the other side, and the door was opened by a hand and arm from the bed which it barely cleared.

"Oh—I'm sorry," Sabra said. "Another backslider."

"Backslider nothing!" Bianca Laredo sat up promptly. "Don't you call me a backslider! I was up before anyone in this whole house." She had been so afraid she would not waken that she had set her alarm early, she said. "I got dressed without

looking at the clock, and I went outside, too, and I was going across to early breakfast, but——” It was clear that she was withholding something.

“Was the sun up?” Sabra asked.

“I don’t know. But the old man was. The night watchman, I mean. Lucky for me that he was. I’d locked myself out.”

“Locked yourself out! What time was it, for goodness’ sake?”

“Not quite five,” said Bianca with a giggle. “The watchman had to let me into the house again. I bet he’s still chuckling. He said he had seen me come out and he knew something was wrong, because I didn’t have any cap. Have you had breakfast?”

They arranged to go to a restaurant for breakfast, since it was much too late now for the dining room, and Sabra went back to the big room to wait while Bianca dressed. Funny what a difference your environment could make in your ideas of time, Sabra thought. Five o’clock on the ranch this time of year meant a lovely greenish light and everything out of doors awaiting the sun that would surely come. But five o’clock in Bay City was something quite different, she was sure. Here it would be grim and lonely and cold. Five o’clock in the city suggested bleak streets and stray gaunt dogs at garbage cans and a single street car making the noise of ten.

“I loved the early morning at the ranch,” she said aloud and snapped the thought off quickly.

I won't think about that the first thing again! She looked about the cheerless room. The first thing that caught her attention was the fireplace with its heap of papers. She found the little book of matches Galen had given her last night and held one to the trash. It was gone in a moment or two, leaving a thin covering of black gossamer flakes over the bricks. "There. That looks better," Sabra said aloud.

"Why!" It was Miss Borland, arrived on air, somehow. "What did you do that for?"

Sabra swung around, almost startled. "Only to clean it up, Miss Borland. Shouldn't I have lighted it?"

"Clean it up! When it takes us a week or more to collect it so we can have a blaze!"

"Oh, I'm dreadfully sorry!" Sabra could hardly keep from laughing. "I thought it was just trash."

"It was," Miss Borland admitted, "but it was all we had."

"Can't I find some wood or coal somewhere?" Sabra was anxious to undo the damage.

"Maybe—in a wood yard. There's none in the house. We're allowed to have a fire, but they don't give us anything to make it out of. Never mind. But don't you dare throw any paper in the wastebasket where the maid'll get it, for she'll burn it up if you do. It's taken us weeks to train her to leave that fireplace alone."

"You won't have to train me that long," Sabra

assured her, an idea already taking shape in her "prob's mind," as she called it. There was plenty of wood to be had at the ranch.

Miss Borland was pulling off her uniform, her shoulders slumped. She looked her apron and collar over and put them into her laundry bag. She did not usually go to bed the moment she came off duty, the senior explained dully. But if you did anything the least bit irregular while you were on night duty—such as going to the dentist in the middle of the day, for instance, following your short night—it took a week, almost, to get back to routine. Or at least it felt that way.

"But otherwise night duty's easier, isn't it?" Sabra asked innocently. "There can't be so many things to do, with all the patients asleep."

"Asleep? Only convalescent sick people sleep the night through, infant!" Miss Borland looked at her with amused, tired eyes. "Of course we don't have nourishments to fix, but you'd be surprised at the number of drinks of water they'll ask for on Men's Medical, where I am. You get people at their sickest at night, you know—and most people die around four o'clock in the morning. Then you don't have as big a staff as the day staff, either——"

"Die?" Sabra said, aghast.

"Why, yes, Miss Dunning." Miss Borland was talking to a probationer now, gently, considerately. "Of course some of the patients do not get well.

You couldn't miss death entirely in a hospital as large as this."

"But then you have a doctor with you too. So you aren't alone—you don't have all the responsibility." Sabra found relief in that.

"Oh, not very often is the doctor there," Miss Borland said. "Unless he happens to be in the house. Sometimes you can get an interne—sometimes you can't. People have a way of going out without any regard to schedules. We don't have enough internes to be everywhere in the house at once." She noted the look on Sabra's face, and her voice turned more reassuring. "But you will never have that responsibility until you've been trained in how to meet it," she said. "At least I hope you won't." She fastened the collar and cuffs to a fresh uniform and said in an entirely different voice, "I'm hungry. You get so you just can't swallow any more bacon and eggs for supper."

Supper! Sabra thought. But of course it would be that, when you worked at night. She was on the verge of asking Miss Borland to go with her and Bianca for more palatable food, but she stopped herself. She would bring home some fruit instead. There was a good chance, she thought, that senior nurses might not go out with probs, and it was much too early in her nursing career to be making any blunders of that sort. Then, too, Sabra knew the wisdom of going slowly in this new environment, as she would in any other with which she was not familiar. I should let them know me better,

too, she thought, before I ask them to accept any invitations from me, though she knew that she herself liked all of her five room-mates.

In the sewing room that afternoon the probationers from House 16 found several others of their class trying on their finished uniforms. Madge Lennox was standing on a metal stool, looking down at the fitter who was marking the hem of her uniform, which new duty-shoe heels had made too long. She smiled at Sabra and beckoned her with her first finger.

"You saved my life yesterday," she said. "I got into that office right on the tick of three thirty-five. It was a good thing I did."

"Oh, you'd have been on time," Sabra said as the seamstress approached her.

"These are yours, Miss Dunning. We've got a great deal to do. You ought to be ready to put them on."

"Instantly!" Sabra said. She pulled off her soft hat, unfastened a clasp or two, gave herself a shake, and stepped out of her one-piece dress as she ducked her head between two extended arms and the blue uniform slipped over her shoulders. "Did you move to your new room?" she asked Madge Lennox, buttoning the blue chambray rapidly.

Yes, she had, Miss Lennox said. It was a packing box with a radiator in it, she thought, and there was a parrot across the alley, beyond that fence. The bird had spent the day calling for some-

body named Luella. "I'm buying a gun this afternoon. I used to be able to hit yellow jackets when I was young and steady."

The fitter in front of her stood up. "That's all."

The head of the sewing-room staff checked over her list. A girl from another room was carrying out stacks of folded blue uniforms and white aprons. Each stack was tied with a string. She put them on the counter which ran along the wall beneath the windows.

The uniforms which had been fitted last were taken into the sewing room. There was a whir of power sewing machines.

Finally the bustle quieted down. Mrs. Mason checked the stacks, comparing a small slip of paper pinned to each with a list in her notebook. "Now! They're all ready. If you haven't got your cuffs and collars and studs you'd better go to the store room and get them first. The aprons'll be all rumpled if you carry 'em around. And come right back for your uniforms."

They trooped to the store room down the corridor and were back again, carrying cardboard boxes of collars and cuffs and big blue cards of white bone studs. Madge Lennox unfolded an apron from her bundle and held it up against herself.

"Won't I look just grand? *See me!*"

No one paid any attention to her.

"All right. You're all thinking you'll look grand yourselves," she said good-naturedly. "You will."

We're going to need something, though, to make us look like nurses."

"I wonder if some of us ever will look like nurses," an acid voice inquired from out the group by the counter.

Miss Lennox looked at her thoughtfully as she came with her armful. "You will," she said directly. "You've got the face and the right kind of eyes. But you'll have to squeeze the lemon juice out of your voice. Now me, I'll always look like a servant girl, I guess, but I can make sick folks buck up. I'll take you on for any amount of that."

"With your wholesome country air," the first girl returned spicily.

Madge Lennox gave her a very level look, a slow flush mounting her face. Without a word she began folding the apron and putting it back under the string.

"I'm afraid you're going to have to press that now," Mrs. Mason said somewhat kindly.

"Mm-hm," Madge Lennox nodded. "I like to iron." She bent over to tighten her shoe lace. "I'll be sure it's neat, Mrs. Mason. You gave them to us that way. Well, I guess I'm through here." She straightened up, her head high, and looked around the moving group with a cool, straight gaze. "Seven A.M. Saturday," she said, as if reminding herself of the hour, and turned and went out the door. "There's a long, long trail a-winding . . ." The softly hummed words came back to the rest

know. "Things had begun to run together for me by that time."

"You'd have seen if you were going to have to stretch yourself as hard as I am to turn a mattress," Miss Stone assured her.

CHAPTER VI

SATURDAY MORNING Sabra awakened before five and lay there thinking. It was her third day at the hospital. It would be her first day in uniform. Three years would be a long time to spend in a room like this. The fog against the windows was opaque gray satin, and for all her firm resolutions of yesterday, she thought of the tawny hills she was used to seeing on first waking, wondering if John Mason really would prove to *be* so good at managing the ranch as she had thought. Had her judgment—and Mr. Stanley's—been colored by her longing to keep the ranch? Would Mr. Mason really be able to make the place earn enough to cover its costs and enough, besides, to compensate him for his work?

It isn't as if he had never had any farming experience, she reminded herself. He had had a good deal of responsible managing before he went to the College of Agriculture. It had seemed to both Sabra and Mr. Stanley that it signified soundness

in a man to choose deliberately to "go back to school" of his own volition years after he had stopped. "But a ranch like that takes some pretty smart planning," she murmured into her pillow. There weren't many men who could see all sides of a thing the way her father could. "And you certainly have to, if you're going to make farming pay." How her father had kept the place free of mortgages was more than she could understand.

Would Mr. Mason get the ranch into debt? The thought almost made her sit up in bed. But then after a moment of strange panic she realized that of course he could not. Mr. Stanley had seen to that. Mr. Mason was not a man on salary. His lease contract did not permit him to incur any debts in the name of the ranch. But she knew well enough that if Mr. Mason contracted debts on his own account the crops on the ranch could be taken to pay them.

I wish I'd stop this! She fidgeted in silence. He has to pay us our share of the crops—that's the *first* debt he's taken on. I'm convinced he's honest. So is Mr. Stanley convinced. He may not make much, but he can't fail completely. He ought to be able to make more than Father ever did. He ought to know more about farming. I bet he does too.

Lifting her head, she looked at her watch, which was clicking along contentedly under her pillow. "I can't start my first day in uniform this way!" she whispered to herself and twisted around on her face so she could see the blue chambray and

the spotless white apron hanging on the other side of the headrail. She leaned to look at her immaculate white poplin shoes, primly side by side on the floor. They were so white that the unstained wood of the shoe trees looked almost brown, though it was really yellow.

Another thought of her father seared through her, leaving its pain, and she blinked to fight back tears. Silly! We'll do it anyway, Galen and I. We can—we will. We'll keep the ranch and do everything we planned. Why, Father knew we would! She reached to toy with the rounded bone studs with which she would shortly be fastening the straps of her apron to the apron belt in back.

And then the room was awake, and the day-duty girls were dressing. In no time at all Sabra was leaving—first of all—laughingly, not minding her room-mates' teasing. And she knew that when she was in uniform things at home were going to be hidden deep in some other self she possessed—not this new fresh-feeling, astonishingly clean and crisp self that dominated her as she went down the steep gray-painted steps.

The street between the hospital and the Nurses' Home was aflutter with girls in blue and white and girls in all white. The crisp aprons of the undergraduates cut amusing shapes in the early-morning breeze. Their arms, bare below the elbow and an inch or two above, were lifted to hold their caps in place. White-shod, they moved quickly toward the gray steps of Macey Entrance, high and grim

and old fashioned, shunning the street-level, polished and modern entrance of Randolph. Brief words of greeting were called here and there as groups approached the doorway at the top of the steep flight.

Sabra and Bianca Laredo, bareheaded, followed somewhat self-consciously, but they went on more confidently as other probationers caught up with them.

"Let's let them get in before we go up the steps," one of them said. "I don't want to wait forever to get through that door." But they went on up.

"Got to start sometime," Madge Lennox remarked, reaching the door first of all. She opened it and held it to allow a group of cap nurses to pass. All the cap nurses smiled. Two or three of them said, "Thank you." Several merely nodded and said, "Good morning."

"Good morning!" Madge Lennox answered, standing very erect, her blue eyes gleaming with interest.

The elevator was jammed when they reached it. They waited for it to come back, and it was jammed again with cap nurses. The probationers' eyes were on the Western Union clock.

"Well, I need exercise," Miss Lennox announced and started up the stairs. The others followed her.

"Aren't we funny?" Sabra asked as they trooped across the landing and on to the second flight. Finally they arrived at the fourth floor, puffing

slightly, and thinned to a self-conscious line again as they came to a long file of men and women, not in uniform, who were backed up against the wall in the narrow corridor which led to the dining room.

The smell of warm human bodies and not-too-fresh clothing mingled unpleasantly with the odors of cooking and of soap and disinfectant and floor wax and painted wainscot. A mumble of unintelligible comment traveled down the file as the probationers passed, and suddenly a double door was jerked open from the inside, disclosing a very long table, and the whole file rushed inside, jostling some of the probationers who had not yet passed. Maids and porters, I guess, Sabra thought. They must put on their uniforms over here somewhere.

The probationers turned the last corner. Two nurses in white came swiftly behind them. Those in the rear held back.

"Good morning! Thank you!" They passed and went into the dining room. The double glass doors swung shut behind them.

Finally one of the probationers reached it. "Oh, gee! I'm scared!" One girl giggled nervously.

Then they all giggled.

"I'm a good goat." Madge Lennox moved ahead. "I'll go first, but you've all got to come." She pushed the door open, holding it, and they saw the big dreary room with its many large round tables, seating six or eight, and the single long one across the entire far end. There were two

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smaller round tables near the door and one other, still smaller, with seats for only four, all empty, just to the right of the door, set back in an alcove.

"Come on!" Miss Lennox' whisper broke into their concentrated stare. "We're not playing statues!" They moved in a squad down the long room and found seats at the end table. Three nurses without caps were already eating there. They looked up and smiled as the probationers approached.

"Mass formation is always safest," one of them said. "We're nearly three months older than you are—we did the same thing. You'll have to reach for things. In a day or two you'll learn to grab and to pick chairs nearest where the food is."

There were stacks of sliced bread on plates, heavy plates, plates that were almost a quarter of an inch thick. Squares of very yellow butter were heaped on smaller thick plates which were scattered about the table. In front of each chair were a knife, a fork, and a spoon, laid crisscross. They were very worn looking. Three or four steaming pint pitchers of milk dotted the table. A large platter with two underdone slices of bacon was near one end. Two gray enamel coffeepots rose above the pitchers and flatware, flanked by a bowl of lumpy sugar. There were two stacks of cups and saucers, fearfully thick and heavy. There were no napkins.

"Did you ever see anything like this?" Bianca asked Sabra in a whisper.

"You'd better start. You'll be late," one of the

older probationers advised. "Time goes like lightning between six-thirty and seven." Almost without exception the probationers looked at their watches. None of them had yet discovered the large clock over the door. The movement of their left hands could have been an oft-repeated drill, coming out from under their apron bibs again. There was a chuckle from the nearest table.

Someone reached out and took a piece of bread and started the plate along the line. Another reached for the coffeepot. "Ouch! It's hot, and it's too heavy to pass. Who wants some?" She began filling cups. She emptied the pot. "You'll have to pour the rest," she called to the girl sitting near the other pot.

"There's nothing in it," the girl said.

One of the older probationers shifted her attention from her food. "Oh!" she said. "You have to hold it up."

"Hold it up?" Sabra asked.

"Yes, this way. Give it to me." Someone pushed it toward her, and she swung the coffeepot up in her left hand, her arm full length, above her head, and went right on eating.

Sabra started to laugh and stopped abruptly, flushing.

"It's the thing," the girl assured her, and in a moment a somewhat untidy waiter appeared. He reached across the table and took the pot, the bottom of his white coat scraping one of the probationer's shoulders as he did so.

"Bring some cereal, too, Ralph—and some bacon."

He came back in a moment with only the coffee and started away again.

"Ralph! Here!" The girl held the platter out. "Snap into it, Ralph!"

When he returned again he came shoving a heavy dummy laden with thick bowls of cereal and a platter of bacon. He put the bacon on the table and slammed a bowl of oatmeal down at each of the occupied places, wiping his thumb off on his soiled pants after each bowl.

Madge Lennox poured hot milk on her cereal, passed the pitcher along, and asked for sugar. There was a stir down the table. The three earlier probationers rose to leave. "Better hurry," one of them said.

"This beats any threshing-crew set-up I ever saw," Madge Lennox remarked. "I suppose it's hot milk in the coffee too? Pass me some, will you, when you're through?"

"It's empty," Sabra said, tilting it.

"Give it to me!" Miss Lennox reached for it and swung it above her head. Ralph came, grinning.

"Cream, please," she said, smiling herself.

"Yeah! Suah! Cree-em!" He sneered and went out.

"Thanks." Madge took it when he came back and gave him the other one. "Fill this, too, please."

Nurses were leaving from other tables. The probationers felt for their watches. Sabra rose first.

The dining room was half empty. The rest ate faster. "You can't work on that much breakfast," Madge Lennox said to her. Sabra did not reply, and Bianca Laredo followed her out.

Finally the rest of them went, leaving cups half filled with dull brown coffee and plates with cold bits of pale bacon. The cereal bowls were without exception empty.

They got into the hall without speaking and hurried down the broad stairs to the second floor, then on into Randolph to the classroom. There were six unmade beds in the classroom now, with a neat stack of bedding on each. Sabra glanced at her watch. One minute of seven. She sat down. The others sat down. The door opened. Miss Wilbur came in, smiling. They all arose, scraping chairs as they did so.

"Good morning," she greeted them.

"Good morning, Miss Wilbur."

"You may be seated," the instructor said, realizing that they had not understood her nod.

They sat down again.

"Did you have breakfast—enough breakfast?"

They smiled and said nothing.

"Or were you too self-conscious to eat? It will be easier at noon, and by tonight you will feel quite at ease. Don't neglect your meals, though, let me urge you. You cannot do your work if you neglect food." She left the subject at once and said briskly, "Now we shall have our first lesson in bed making."

She asked them to stand around the first bed, leaving her room in which to work. "I will show you how we make our beds throughout the hospital. Then you will practice each step, and after that you will each make the bed completely."

They spent the next hour learning how to turn a mattress without making a noise or scattering any possible dust, learning how to spread a fresh and specially folded sheet across the bed without shaking it out. They learned how to mitre the sheet at the corners of the mattress and how to fasten it so firmly that it could not wrinkle. A wide strip of rubber, called a drawsheet, came next, and a like strip of cotton drill to cover it. Both must be taut and smooth across the center of the bed. Then the top sheet, the blanket, the spread, each mitred separately at the foot. It was hard to do. They had no idea that a thing which looked so easy could be so difficult to do.

"Don't be discouraged," Miss Wilbur said. "It takes practice."

Even the pillow had to be placed a certain way, the open end of the case away from the door of the room. "Always," Miss Wilbur said. Macey beds had only one pillow, she said, but Randolph had two. Expenses must be kept down in the clinic wards, and Macey was all clinic. Only one pillow. It was a fact which stuck in Sabra's thoughts. She would have thought that a poor man needed comfort even more than one who was not poor.

Finally they were shown how to place the chair and the bedside table and the small tray with its water pitcher and glass. "This is Macey practice," Miss Wilbur said. "In Randolph there are thermos jugs and a different kind of table. You will be instructed later on how to arrange them. Are there any questions?"

They performed these first steps in nursing practice again and again. Trying to work more and more rapidly. Timing themselves. Getting a little breathless about it and being told to keep calm. Miss Wilbur moved among them, correcting, encouraging, now a note of extra patience in her voice, now approval, now praise. Once or twice something very firm and hard. One girl left her own bed to watch another and was advised quietly to center her attention on her own work.

"Do not lift any piece of bedding until you are ready to use it. Know what you are going to do with it, then do it at once. Speed comes only with practice. Avoid fumbling. Teach yourself to be sure." She made the rounds again, commenting: "That is very nice. . . . You use your hands well. . . . Remember, begin at the head of the bed on the right side. Finish the bed on that side except for the pillows, then go to the left side, finish, and place the pillow." And then she asked again if there were any questions about the correct way to make an unoccupied bed.

"Unoccupied!" someone gasped. But there were

no questions. The probationers' minds had been much too full of the doing to have any room for questions.

"Now we will learn how to make a bed in which there is a convalescent patient," Miss Wilbur was saying. She opened a door to an adjoining room and wheeled in a gurney on which lay a very quiet patient with a blanket drawn up over her chin a trifle. As she pushed the gurney along Miss Wilbur studied the abruptly sobered faces of the probationers with a flicker of real fun in her gray eyes.

"The patient's name is Matilda. Matilda is thoroughly familiar with the ways of the hospital. She has been here for years. She may seem a little unresponsive, but you will doubtless be grateful for that at first." Miss Wilbur helped the sawdust lady to sit up. "I want to show you her nightingale."

It was an amazing garment, the probationers thought, hardly able to keep from laughing. High necked, long sleeved, knee length, and fastened in the back with strings.

"I'm going to keep well!" Sabra vowed, whispering, letting the laughter loose.

At that instant the door was pushed open, and a cap nurse started in but drew back with a quiet "Excuse me, Miss Wilbur." Sabra recognized the nurse who had been in the elevator yesterday. Was her sail full of wind about to be deflated once more? But, no. Miss Wilbur smiled. "Good morning, Miss Gregory. Will you help me lift Matilda to the bed?" She put the question quite seriously,

though her class thought any of them could have helped her, and Miss Gregory took her place at the side of the gurney, which had been pushed close to the bed, on which only the sheet and drawsheets had been placed. Miss Wilbur went to the other side of the bed, extended her arms across it to reach underneath the "patient," and Matilda was deposited smoothly in the center of the bed, with the gurney already moving out of the way.

"Goodness, how fast they do things!" Sabra said under her breath, marveling at the smooth movements of these two nurses.

Miss Wilbur was making the bed. They watched her hands with something close to awe, certain that they never could learn to work so surely, so swiftly, without seeming at all in a hurry. Miss Gregory asked if she could be of further assistance, and at Miss Wilbur's "No, thank you," she went out as swiftly as she had come, her sails ready, as Sabra thought, bringing her attention back guiltily to Miss Wilbur, for Matilda was settled beneath her covers now, her painted face wearing a smirk that might mean anything you cared to make it mean.

"She looks awfully wise," Madge Lennox remarked, eying her.

"She is—but she can't talk, fortunately." Miss Wilbur had finished her demonstration, and in turn the probationers tried to do likewise.

Then volunteers from the class became patients, and removing their aprons and shoes they climbed

on the beds, each patient keeping a close check on the classmate who was acting as nurse.

"Now we will discuss this from the patient's point of view," Miss Wilbur said, and they sighed with relief as they sank into their chairs. "What did you observe as a patient, Miss Stanley?"

Miss Stanley arose. "Why, for one thing, Miss Wilbur, I noticed that if the nurse strikes the bed roller with her foot the patient gets a jar."

"Good point. Miss Lang, what did you observe?"

"Miss Wilbur," said Miss Lang, getting up, "I'd have permanently turned-up toes if I'd had to stay there much longer. The sheets were fastened down so tight—the top sheet, I mean." Several of the others had noticed the same thing. They were shown how to correct it—how to avoid it.

"Now—what else?" Miss Wilbur looked them over. "Miss Dunning?"

"I felt like a sawdust lady myself," Sabra said. "We were all so serious, so concerned with what we were doing."

"How would you improve that?"

"I'd feel important if I were a patient. I'd want someone to talk to me, I think, unless I was awfully ill."

"What would you talk about, Miss Dunning, if you were making a bed for a real patient?"

"I know!" Madge Lennox said with a chuckle.

"Well, goodness, I'm sure I don't." Sabra sat down. "You tell them." The class joined in her

laughter, and Miss Wilbur made Madge Lennox pay the penalty of her enthusiasm.

"If it was my first patient, Miss Wilbur, I wouldn't know very much about her, maybe. I could tell her about the really first patient I ever made a bed for—Matilda. And I'd say that of course Matilda couldn't tell me if I had the sheets too tight at the bottom, for instance, and I'd say, 'But I'm sure you would, wouldn't you, Mrs. Jones?' "

The other probationers looked at Miss Lennox with undisguised admiration.

"The point is," Miss Wilbur said, "don't ever forget that you are working with people—not sawdust ladies. Every sort of problem can and does arise in a hospital, where you must remember that the nurses and the doctors and staff are probably the only people who are themselves. The rest are sick—they're not themselves. We will try to discuss some of these problems in class as they arise." Miss Wilbur looked down at her desk a moment.

"The nurse's personal attitude," she said at last, "is something much more difficult to discuss. All I can do is try to give you a clue—or several clues. You must think out for yourselves what to do about them. Thinking over again what I am about to say to you, I think that after all I'm just going to sum up a foundation for poise in any walk of life. It will be especially valuable in nursing. Therefore, I would say to you, 'Have a heart,' as the phrase goes, but don't wear it on your sleeve. Be gentle,

but never personal. Be kind, but never intrusive. Be swift, but never in a hurry. Be quiet, but never mousy. Be firm, but never dictatorial. Be sure, but never cocksure. Keep your eyes and your ears and your minds and your hearts open, always."

"And our mouths shut, I suppose," came from the rear of the room.

"Yes. Just that. For two reasons," Miss Wilbur said. "If your mouths are open you'll probably breathe through them, and that's always bad. The other reason is an implied one. An ability to keep one's mouth shut is a very valuable asset indeed, and a necessary asset for a nurse. Because they are ill, patients' self-control is likely to be at low ebb, and they will tell the nurse things which later they greatly regret having mentioned. Even people who are not seriously ill do that, and it is very comfortable to feel that what has been said under such circumstances is not going to be repeated—or even to be remembered. So unless you are told something which is valuable for use in understanding them as patients, forget it before you leave the room."

Miss Wilbur stood up, glancing at her watch. "We shall now take time to go through the hospital. We shall not come back to this room this morning. Twelve o'clock lunch. Report here at one. You are about to make your first appearance in the corridors and wards. Your instructor is responsible for you. I hope none of you will lose sight of me. The hospital is a large place. Later we will

study layout charts and check back on how much you recall of what you see this morning. I think it will be best if we proceed in threes." With a slight movement of her head she signaled them to follow her and with a quick smile acknowledged the courtesy of the probationer who held the door open for her.

The class followed her out, grouping in threes behind her as neatly as if the line of them had been snipped in even lengths with scissors.

CHAPTER VII

WE SHALL GO through Randolph first," Miss Wilbur said, "starting at the first floor. Since there are so many of us and we have not too much time, we will go this way." She opened a door across the corridor from the elevators, and they followed her down the enclosed wide stairway.

At the foot of the first flight Miss Wilbur stopped abruptly and reminded them that they were student nurses, not a regiment of cavalry, and they descended the rest of the way as if their knee and hip joints were made of something easily breakable, so anxious were they to be noiseless about it.

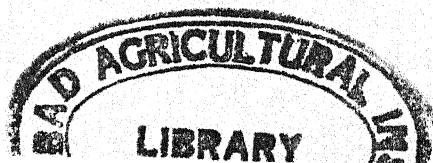
Flashing an amused glance at them over her shoulder, Miss Wilbur opened the door into Randolph First corridor, and there was a faint *hisp-hisp* from their new duty shoes as they moved quickly along it. She called their attention to the main corridor desk, the reception desk, behind

which was a student nurse, who arose as Miss Wilbur went by.

They turned to the right and went down the long corridor, past the X-ray Department, stopping for a moment to examine a series of photographic plates on racks with a light behind them. They spent a short time in the X-ray-apparatus room, and came out into the corridor again to stand sober-eyed while a patient on a gurney was taken into the X-ray room which they had just visited.

From there they went to the Physio-Therapy Department, where some of the curious apparatus was explained, and they were surprised to learn that plain, ordinary water at different temperatures and in different depths was used in the treatment of diseases. Well—you soaked your feet, didn't you, when they were tired after a long hike? Why not soak your whole body if it was tired? But Miss Wilbur requested that there be no whispering, and the comments broke off guiltily.

Back up the stairs again, having passed offices and record rooms and a few doctors' consultation rooms, they arrived at the second floor once more, part of which was still unfinished. They went past their classroom door, past small swept-up piles of lath and plaster, past the workmen in white overalls who stared at them, and down to the end of the corridor, to the wide doors of the ambulance entrance, where motor ambulances drove in off the street. It was the shadowed road Sabra had noticed



on her first visit to the hospital. They were told never to use this entrance themselves.

To the left of the door they went into one of the sterilizing rooms and examined the apparatus. Huge gleaming steam sterilizers lined the walls, their polished nickel shining above the white-tiled floors.

Then back down the corridor to the supply rooms, beyond the classroom, and across the hall, and to the main supply room, where a determined-looking woman in spectacles gazed out at them appraisingly over a half door as they approached. She opened the door unoblingly, as if she wanted no intruders within her domain, and at Miss Wilbur's request she listed the articles and instruments on one shelf in her amazing batteries of cabinets and cupboards.

"Imagine knowing the names of so many things!" Bianca Laredo exclaimed. "How do you ever learn them all?"

"I cut my teeth on 'em," the woman in charge replied with a look which Bianca said later she could feel "to the back of her skull." There was something very respectful and a bit cautious in the faces of the probationers before they got out of that main supply room.

They were almost relieved to cross the corridor to a small dressings-supply room, where a group of nurses wearing respiratory masks were sitting around a table, making little folded pads of gauze. At another table two embarrassed nurses were

pulling apart to fluffiness small, hard-looking wads of cotton. "I'm surprised at you!" Miss Wilbur said to them.

"Twelve-fifteen, Miss Wilbur," one of them replied laconically, but the other nurse only turned a little redder.

Punishment for something, Sabra concluded, surmising that the task was not a particularly pleasant one. Bianca Laredo whispered a remark about "being good" which Sabra could not fully hear. Curious things were made of gauze, apparently. She wondered what they were for. No raw edges anywhere, she noticed. There would be a reason for that, too, she was sure. "Hmmm. Threads in wounds."

"Right," said Miss Wilbur, smiling. And only then did Sabra realize that she had spoken aloud.

"You will find that a good deal of nursing practice is only common sense," Miss Wilbur said to them as she led them up the stairs to the third floor.

"Common sense in advance, I guess," Miss Lennox remarked.

Yes, that was right, too, the instructor agreed. She showed them unoccupied rooms, calling their attention particularly to the general appearance of the room. Everything in order. Not a fleck of dust.

Then the nurses' station, with its desk, its chart rack, its electric signal board with numbers here and there showing momentarily in light. "See."

Miss Wilbur pointed down the corridor, where colored lights went out almost at once when the nurses moving toward them entered the rooms. As they watched one light remained on, though they had seen the nurse go in, and another nurse passed swiftly to open the door beneath it, draw back with a murmured "Excuse me," and come down the corridor again and disappear into a room with a swinging door marked Diet Kitchen. Not one of the probationers missed the fact that the light over that door went out promptly after the second nurse had opened it.

"For your sakes I'm glad that happened," Miss Wilbur said. "Make a mental note of it." The time of two nurses had been taken, she said, where only one was necessary, because the first nurse had neglected to switch off the call light, which should have been attended to the moment she reached the patient's bed.

"Maybe the patient had upset something," Madge Lennox suggested. Miss Wilbur took a moment then to discuss that. It was possible that there had been an acceptable reason for not turning the light off, she said, but she doubted it in this particular case. The second nurse had gone in almost at once, and she had come out as promptly. No, the instructor thought that this was a case of negligence.

"But what could it hurt?" Miss Lang asked.

"Nothing possibly—except to call a second nurse, as I said before. But when the light is left

on deliberately it means that the nurse needs assistance—it indicates an emergency of some sort. That emergency may be not serious, or it may be very serious. If one nurse is careless she not only wastes the time of other nurses, but she may be causing her patient unnecessary disturbance.” Speculation about such possibilities showed in the faces of several probationers, but no one said anything. They were gradually becoming less aware of themselves and more aware of the hospital.

They visited the treatment room and the utility room on this Randolph floor for this particular wing. From the clean black lettering on their swinging glass doors to the last utensil in them they were as immaculate as the inside of a watch, Sabra thought. Small tiled rooms, they were, with an extensive array of utensils, glassed cupboards, gleaming small sterilizers, gleaming large sterilizers, and great glass bottles with what appeared to be water in them.

There was the “treatment table” with its spotless cover and tidy small pillow and its gleaming metal stirrups hanging down. There was a high white stool underneath the foot of it and a low white stool, with a rubber-covered top, underneath the middle of it. The rubber reminded Sabra of the running board of an automobile. That stool must be for the patient to use as a step, she concluded. Against the wall stood a gurney, looking for all the world, several of them thought, like an ironing board on wheels. An oversize ironing board, with

rubber-tired wheels almost big enough for a bicycle at one end and little six-inch wheels at the other. The small pair were on pivots—were the others? They did not have time to see, for Miss Wilbur was calling their attention to something else.

There was a three-burner gas flat with the burners lighted. A small oddly shaped enameled basin of water with small nickel things in it was on one burner, and another one with a glass tube in it and a glass rod was on the second burner. Kidney basins, Miss Wilbur said these were called. On the third burner stood a long-necked Florence flask, in which water was boiling rapidly, the clear blue flame showing brilliantly through the bubbles, as if gaiety were its only concern. This flask had a rubber stopper from which a glass connecting tube led to a second flask on the table, and the probationers realized that this was water being distilled, and they were reminded of chemistry laboratories somewhere in their now-distant past.

They went back down the cool, shiny corridor and across the one at the end and into the floor's diet kitchen, with its gleaming coffee urns and its tall yellow wood racks, like backless bookshelves on wheels. Each shelf held several nickeled trays laid with linen and silver and a little paper flag with a printed number on it.

From there they climbed another stairway to the floor known as Randolph Fourth, with its two-part open wards, A and C, one for women patients

and the other for men. On these wards the head nurse was a senior, and the desk was enclosed in a glass cubicle. These were both surgical wards, Miss Wilbur said.

Across the hall were several separate rooms, and where the main corridor came in, like the stem of the letter T, began a "private floor," where a graduate nurse was head and also had a supervisory responsibility for A and C. Opposite the joint between the stem and the bar of this T Miss Wilbur led them into the diet kitchen. The tray racks here, too, were filled with set-up trays. The coffee urn was steaming slightly, a clear glass column filled with amber liquid standing up its side. A junior nurse and two Filipino boys in immaculate white were working hurriedly, placing salads on the trays. The nurse looked hot and flustered, but the boys grinned at the probationers.

"All alone?" Miss Wilbur asked.

"Yes, Miss Wilbur," the nurse replied.

"A lot of trays for one person."

The nurse did not answer.

The probationers went out and down the corridor, the gleaming white-tiled corridor which ended in a bright solarium at the base of the T. On either side of the corridor were polished dark doors of private rooms. Midway were treatment, utility and flower rooms. The graduate head nurse came out of the station, which was in a niche in the wall, and approached to greet Miss Wilbur with the conventional "Good morning, Miss Wilbur."

"I've been expecting you," she said, walking along beside the instructor. "Doctor Malvern is using the treatment room at the moment. He will be finished soon, I think. You might show your class the solarium first." And the class fluttered on—"fluttered" was the only word Sabra could think of which accurately described their movement—into the oval-shaped room with its little groups of comfortable chairs and small tables. It was somewhat like a room in a private house, but much more severe in its orderliness. The walls were mostly windows which looked out over the city's tight-packed hills and let the place be flooded with the noon sun. The room was quite empty of patients. It was just serving time, Miss Wilbur said; they had gone back to their rooms for lunch.

She led them back down the corridor and turned left, and their feet thumped faintly as they went down the ramp between Randolph and Macey. "You know where you are now, don't you?" she asked them, and someone breathed a surprised "The dining room!" It was the first thing any of them had seen that they recognized.

"But you haven't seen it!" Miss Wilbur laughed softly. "It's around the corner. It was that ramp that reminded you." She was very much amused at them and told them that it proved how much noise they had made on the ramp. She pointed out the main staff kitchen and the main diet kitchen but did not take them into either one. "We wouldn't be welcome just now." In the main diet

kitchen, she told them, all foods were prepared for patients except those dishes which would be made less palatable by the necessary delay in delivery by dummy to the wards. Such foods—an omelet, for instance—were prepared in the ward diet kitchens. “You’ll see all you want of the main diet kitchen before you have completed your training,” she told them, sounding very much as if she meant it.

“Goodness, Miss Wilbur, do we have to learn to cook too?”

“Patients must eat,” Miss Wilbur replied. “Not only must you learn to prepare foods; you must learn the values of foods and their relation to disease.”

“Oh, I think that will be awfully interesting!” Sabra exclaimed.

“And I thought I was coming into training to get away from cooking meals and doing house-work!” another wailed.

The rooms on Randolph Fourth, Miss Wilbur told them, ranged in price from twelve dollars to twenty dollars a day, on Randolph Fifth from fifteen to twenty-five. In the wards, A and C prices began at seven. Higher rooms meant higher prices.

“But that includes nurses and everything, doesn’t it?”

“Only if the patient is on what we call ‘general duty.’ She does not have a special nurse. In this hospital if a special nurse is on the case the special nurse is paid separately, and her meals must be paid for, too, by the patient. The room price is for

the room, meals, and general staff service for the patient." There were less expensive rooms on lower floors and still less expensive in Macey, where some were as low as two dollars and a half a day.

"But, my word," someone said, "a lot of people couldn't even pay that much!"

"For them there are the clinics, which are free if the patient is unable to pay. The clinic beds are always filled."

"That's where I want to work," Sabra said, half to herself.

"Me too," said Madge Lennox and Bianca Laredo in one breath. But several of the others said they wanted to work in the Randolph wards. Someone remarked that it looked as though they would be able to divide up the work to their own satisfaction, and she seemed somewhat taken aback when Miss Wilbur said that each of them would spend part of her training in each section of the hospital but that the bulk of it would doubtless be in clinic wards.

They went down one floor and along another corridor. "We are in Macey again now. There are Macey Medical Division, Macey Surgical Division, Randolph Medical and Randolph Surgical. This is Macey North. The north-side wards are spoken of as First North, Second North, and so on, and the south-side wards as Second South, Third South, and so on. North wards are women's wards; south wards are men's wards, in most cases.

"This is Children's Ward, better known, perhaps, as Kids'. But you must not call it that in public, nor in official converse, I'll say, being very proper." She showed them private rooms for children, and then they went into a narrow corridor and turned into a desk and chart room which was enclosed in glass and from which they could see into a large ward with small beds in which the patients were children. The ward seemed very busy and very noisy. There were all sorts of noises, Sabra thought, from moans to howls of pure temper, from giggles to the stern voice of a nurse trying to quiet some screamer.

"Oh—how long does it take to get assigned here, Miss Wilbur?" Miss Stone asked, as if she could hardly wait to be here.

"In all that row?" Another girl stared at her. "Well, I'm in no hurry to be sent here!" It was the girl who had announced that she did not intend to stand back very long for anyone, and Bianca sent Sabra a glance.

"Children's Ward isn't exactly a place just to spend your time," Miss Wilbur said gravely, quietly, kindly, Sabra thought. "You will be surprised to find how quickly you will be able to forget that a child is petulant," Miss Wilbur went on, "when you understand more of why he is petulant. It is a very real satisfaction to learn to quiet that sort of child, so that he can begin to get well."

Near the glass was a pale, gaunt child, apparently playing with his fingers. Sabra saw Miss Len-

nox watching him. After a moment she put her fingers against the glass to get his attention, and when his big eyes turned toward her she, too, began "playing with her fingers."

"Look!" Sabra whispered, getting Miss Wilbur's attention. Miss Lennox was making definite signs with her fingers now, and the little boy was grinning broadly, talking back—on his hands.

"How did you guess?" Miss Wilbur asked her.

"We have one in our town," Miss Lennox said. "I learned so I could teach him things. This kid's quick, even if he is a mute. Lots of them are."

The class were astonished, but Miss Wilbur was delighted. "Two guesses as to where your first ward work will be!" she said, and Madge Lennox' freckled face looked very pleased.

The class went to the second floor, with its north and south, in and out of wards with long rows of beds, nearly all of them occupied. Between rows of women's faces, it seemed. Worn faces, flushed faces, pale faces, brazen faces, pathetic faces. Sad eyes, defiant eyes, curious eyes, uninterested eyes, following them as their group moved on, quite forgetting itself now in the intensity of consciousness of those in the beds.

All about them nurses were busy. Young men in white were talking seriously with nurses or sometimes laughingly with patients. Older men in perfectly tailored business clothes sat by one or two of the beds, writing in a book with a metal cover, while a nurse stood beside him, waiting.

They went on down to the ground floor, Macey. "We are now coming to one of the most interesting wards in the house," Miss Wilbur told them. "It is called Men's Medical. It is a clinic ward. There are cases here that absolutely break one's heart. Some of them have been here for months. Many of them cannot recover; some of them undoubtedly will recover. They are of all nationalities. A good many of them know no English at all. This ward puts the student nurse to the severest test she will meet anywhere in the hospital, I think. But I've always thought it the most interesting." This was where Miss Borland was on night duty, Sabra remembered, envying her already.

They went slowly down the long, long room with its rows of beds on either side. A nurse at the desk arose as they approached, a nurse in white. "Good morning, Miss Wilbur." A quick smile came into her black eyes as she looked over the probationers, and Sabra thought, She knows all of our weaknesses already.

Miss Wilbur asked if they might see one of the patients' charts. Any one. And Miss Gilbert, the head nurse, handed her a chart from the rack. Miss Wilbur opened it. "This is the chart for the patient in the first bed there. Get a glimpse of him if you can without staring." She showed them the first page of the chart—the identifying page—with the patient's name, home address, name of nearest relative, name of his doctor, and the date of his entry into the hospital. The next several pages, on

paper of a different color, were his history, she said, or the story of his illness before he came to the hospital, and the story to date, told in narrative form, written in ink by the interne or the examining physician. Next were several finely ruled sheets with graphs drawn on them in ink. These were temperature graphs, the line rising and falling with the temperature recorded from day to day. Then there was the day-by-day complete record of the patient's treatment and care and medicines—carefully hand-printed pages, in ink, on which was recorded every single thing that took place in regard to that patient.

"It even says he drank two ounces of water," one of the probationers remarked, pointing. "And here he refused orange juice."

But Sabra was more interested in the patient himself than in his chart, for the moment. He had a hunted look, she thought, pity coming into her own eyes. When he looked toward her again she smiled at him, but his expression did not change.

Miss Wilbur led the class out through a dingy gray narrow hall to the even dingier rooms of the clinic reception divisions. And from there they climbed a narrow winding staircase through the medical college, where Sabra knew Galen had attended his years of classes. Floor after floor they visited. Down one corridor flanked on either side with gruesome specimens in glass jars, past a door from which came the plaintive whimperings of an animal. Past another door shutting off a volley of

barks and growls and another hiding the source of minute squeals.

"Whatever is that?" someone asked.

"Guinea pigs," Miss Wilbur said.

She led them on through malodorous laboratories and later had them pause for a glimpse into lecture rooms shaped like deep bowls, with seats curving row on row around the sides. The whole vast old building smelled of strange pursuits. Smelled suggestively, threateningly, of things the probationers did not understand. And they grew sober-faced and serious-eyed and very, very tired. Tired of the sinister something which permeated the place. Tired from the steep winding stairs, difficult to climb, and even more difficult to descend. They were almost glad that Miss Wilbur could not take them to the surgical divisions today. There was influenza about, she said, and no visitors at all were being permitted in surgery.

Then suddenly they were out on the street, and the air was filled with sun and freshness and the moistness of recently departed fog. They would take just a peep at the library, the instructor said. They must hurry for lunch.

"Hurry! We've been running for a solid hour!" someone said, half laughing, half complaining. "Gee, this air is good!"

"It always is after those laboratories," Miss Wilbur said. "As for running—in six weeks you will look back on this trip as a mere saunter."

They trooped up the library steps, crossed the

lobby, stood a moment, gazing silently at the huge reading room with its long tables and green-shaded lights and ceiling-high cases of thick books, some richly bound, some in shabby paper. "You'll do a good deal of studying here the next three years," Miss Wilbur said. "Now we'll go up Randolph Walk to the other street, and you must go down to Macey Entrance to get to the dining room."

She swung ahead of them up the hill, saying lightly over her shoulder, "Class at one, remember."

"Will we ever learn to move that way?" Bianca Laredo asked. "I'm absolutely all in, myself. Are you?" She caught up with Sabra.

"It's colossal, isn't it?" Sabra ignored the question—the answer could be taken for granted.

"I'm just plain awe-struck!" Miss Laredo confessed, and Sabra nodded silently.

She was wondering what disease could make a man look so hunted as that patient in Men's Medical.

CHAPTER VIII

THE PROBATIONERS entered the dining room this time with much less concern than they had shown at breakfast and disposed with alacrity of the food put before them. One o'clock found them back in the classroom.

Miss Wilbur entered, looking, so far as they could see, as fresh as she had at seven. They were still somewhat constrained as they rose to acknowledge her entrance, and they made considerable stir, but she let it pass without comment. "I want each of you to strip and remake a bed," she said. "The mattress is to be turned. The time generally allowed for the making of an unoccupied bed is three minutes. See how nearly you can meet it." She assigned six students to beds. "The others will observe your work. You may start."

There was a good deal of hustling, a giggle or two, some confused hesitation, and much fumbling. The first girl finished.

"Six minutes," Miss Wilbur said.

At the end of twelve minutes all were finished, but some of the beds had individual touches which were at odds with the rules.

"What was your chief trouble?" Miss Wilbur asked.

"Being self-conscious," someone said honestly.

"Perhaps. What else?"

"I'm too used to shaking a sheet out across the bed, for one thing," another girl said. "I had to stop and think to do it correctly."

"Think next time without stopping," the instructor advised. "All right, the next group may try it."

Someone finished in four minutes. And finally all had tried it, and each of them was sure she could do it more rapidly next time. Miss Wilbur hoped so. Three times as long as the minutes allotted was excessive, she said. They must omit all the considering, she said, all the uncertainty, all the unnecessary motions, all the unnecessary thinking. The task must become almost automatic.

"Automatic!" someone exclaimed.

"Yes." Miss Wilbur's eyebrows lifted slightly. "When you tie your shoe laces you don't *think* about doing it, do you?"

"Goodness, no."

"That's what I mean. It will come. Make it come as soon as you can, so you will have your time for more interesting things." But the bed must be perfectly made, she reminded them. Bed making might be one of the less interesting activities in the hospital, but it was by no means the least impor-

tant. It must be the perfection that was automatic, she said with a slight smile.

But even then they were not finished with beds. They learned how to get a bed ready for a patient just being admitted, placing empty hot-water bottles in it to take the chill off. Until they had been taught exactly how to prepare a hot-water bottle, Miss Wilbur said, they would use empty ones. And the probationers looked at each other wisely. Did she think they didn't even know that much?

Then there was an "ether bed" for a patient returning from surgery. The covers on this bed could be opened lengthwise with a single movement.

Matilda, carefully wrapped in an "ether blanket," was brought "back from surgery." Miss Wilbur, acting as surgery nurse, showed how the patient was to be lifted from the gurney to the bed, then asked Miss Laredo to help her. Two nurses were always necessary for this task. Still under the effects of anæsthetic, Matilda flopped quite realistically when Miss Laredo withdrew her hands too suddenly in her effort to be swift.

"It's lucky she's sawdust," Miss Wilbur remarked soberly. "That might have caused some torn stitches."

"Good heavens!" Sabra exclaimed, and Miss Wilbur let them think about that while she brought in from the next room the things they would need for giving Matilda a bed bath—their next "procedure."

The "patient's" varnished exterior was subjected

to eleven separate scrubblings with dry wash cloths folded carefully around uncertain hands, so that the ends and corners would not flap and annoy her. Matilda endured it without complaint, her smile remaining fixedly in place.

The taking of temperatures they practiced on each other, handling the fragile thermometers in a gingerly fashion, tilting them this way and that way and the other way in their first futile efforts to align the top of the mercury column with the marks on the gauge. They made faces and squinted and pursed their mouths and wondered if they needed spectacles. Were all thermometers as hard to read as these?

After a false fever was recorded in warm water they learned to "shake down" the thermometer, practicing first with their pencils. It required a quick flip of the wrist, which was neither a jerk nor a flowing movement. Miss Wilbur could get the mercury below ninety-six degrees—where it must be before the thermometer was used again—in a single flip. She taught them to read the gauge, record the temperature on a pad, reread the thermometer, shake it down, clean it, and put it back in its place on the "temperature tray." You read; you wrote; you reread. In short, you eliminated the possibility of error in this small but all-important task. Temperature was a semaphore, Miss Wilbur said, on the main line of disease.

One girl shook down her thermometer with such determination that it flew out of her hand, struck

somewhere on the floor behind her, and thereafter refused to reveal a single trace of itself. The incident made a profound impression.

Next they felt and counted each other's pulse rate. "Use your first three fingers together," Miss Wilbur said. "There is no such thing as a sensitive thumb. The doctors and nurses who have them are only in fiction." She proved this to them by having them test their own fingers against a piece of sandpaper. And she convinced them that it is easier to keep three fingers light than just one. They discovered how too much pressure could temporarily cut off the pulse entirely in the wrist and that the resulting "recovery pulse" was quickened.

With pulses and temperatures out of the way for the time being, they watched their student-patient's chest and abdomen intently, almost holding their own breath, to get the respiration rate, and through it all they tried futilely to look unconcerned.

Miss Wilbur then demanded that they do all three at once, and to their surprise they found that they could read a pulse rate while the patient had a thermometer in her mouth, that they could keep their eyes on the second hand of their watches while a part of their attention was concerned with what their finger tips were feeling, and that they could count respirations and still keep their fingers on the patient's wrist, as if they were still reading the pulse. And they had no twinges of conscience at all when they understood the reason for doing

this last. It helped to keep the patient quiet, and it tended to prevent any faking, either intentional or unconscious, on the part of the patient. More accurate observations could be made, Miss Wilbur explained, if the patient did not realize that her respirations were being counted. Some patients, she assured them, could even change their pulse rates on occasion. The probationers tried to do it themselves—entirely without success.

"Proves you're not neurotic," Miss Wilbur said with a chuckle, but none of them was quite sure what she meant until they thought it over. Without their being aware of it, however, she had given them a first lesson in anatomy and psychology. The body's pumping plant could be controlled for brief periods by the mind. And the curiosity which that fact aroused in them was enormous.

Finally they were given paper on which to record their T.P.R. findings, and they got reassurance and stimulus from being party to the secret of those three letters, which they might from now on use themselves. T.P.R. Temperature, pulse, respiration.

For the next half hour they practiced printing, copying a note Miss Wilbur had written on a small blackboard. "It is absolutely essential that all records on charts and elsewhere in the hospital be printed. Never use script. Never use pencil. That means be sure your fountain pen is filled each morning—black ink only. Your printing must be small,

neat, and entirely legible." Her own looked as if it had been done with type.

The practice over, they each opened a chart for Matilda. A few moments went in writing in the admission data, which they took from dictation, not knowing much about it yet, and after that they recorded the T.P.R. of the student patient they had just attended.

"Now," Miss Wilbur said, "we will assume that your patient had breakfast, a 'regular diet,' as we call it, at 7 A.M. after morning care at six-thirty. She had a bath at eight. Her doctor visited her at ten." She repeated these events slowly, letting the class make note of them on scratch pads, and then asked that they be charted.

For a few moments there was no sound in the classroom, save perhaps the slight hiss of indrawn breath as one probationer after another finished one printed word and drew sustenance for the printing of another. They could have been penning the most serious documents ever written, from the seriousness of their faces.

Miss Wilbur examined the finished sheets with great care and with a speed which astonished them began her comments: "You have not recorded the time in any case, Miss Lang. Miss Lennox, there's no date here. Miss Stanley, you have the pulse rate in the respiration column. Matilda isn't that ill. Miss Dunning, your printing is a little temperamental. Miss Laredo, yours is too large. Miss Whitman, you have misspelled the patient's name. Miss

Stone, your patient has no doctor." And so it went.

At four-thirty the session was closed.

"You will report to five-thirty supper tonight if you eat at the hospital. You are free all day Sunday, but you must be in your rooms at ten o'clock. Your rooms must be in order before you leave them for the first time each day. Rooms are inspected frequently and without notice. Monday at 7 A.M. you will report in this room. You may come here for practice if you wish between now and Monday. You must get permission from Miss MacLaren's office to come to this room at any time other than stated class hours, but permission will be granted unless the room is in use. You cannot have too much practice. You are dismissed."

She went out swiftly.

There was a general murmur of relief as the class moved toward the doors. They did not talk going along the corridor to the elevators. They were too exhausted to talk, even in the whispers which might be permitted.

They packed one elevator to capacity, and the rest waited for the next. Their weariness seemed to communicate itself to the operator, and for once he had nothing to say. He manipulated the door lever at the main floor as if it took more energy than he could well muster, and they filed out, making straight for Macey door, their faces sober, their eyes seeing nothing at all but the door, their shoulders all but slumped beneath the broad white straps of their aprons.

Outside they breathed more normally, getting rid of pent-up sighs, and before they were across the street the chatter started. "Do you always get as tired as this?" "Do you always have to pay attention to so many different kinds of things in a single day?" "Are you expected to get everything straight, though you were told it only once?" "Don't you feel untidy after all that bed making?" "Wasn't Matilda funny?" "Do they drive you on the wards the way Miss Wilbur drove us in class?"

How could anyone possibly stand eight hours *and* classes?

That last question was in the minds of all of them. Once voiced, it started more speculation. Were you expected to work that fast and with that concentration and be able to study afterward? Were the classes in theory lecture classes, or did you have to answer questions? No one knew, and one more concern was planted.

They began telling each other how long it had been since they had studied from a textbook. Not since before commencement—a month before, at least. Not since last January, one said. Not for a whole year, said another, who was, Sabra thought, either older than she looked or smarter than the rest of them.

They gathered in a little huddle on the sidewalk midway of the block and stood there, piling reaction upon reaction, fear upon fear, guess upon guess, until suddenly some one of them remembered that Miss Wilbur had said they must not

loiter on the street in uniform or ever go outside the hospital area in uniform, and they scattered like leaves in a gust of wind, calling back brief attempts at cheerfulness.

Would anyone practice bed making tonight? Several would. Tomorrow? All but two of them would love to. Hours were set, considered, and re-set. They might as well sleep the last morning they would ever be permitted to sleep. Eight o'clock for bed making jumped recklessly to ten and was set back again sturdily to nine—nine at the very latest. They were speaking back and forth now from the steps of the houses, neighbor to neighbor. No one was shouting; the houses were too close to need that, but their voices were clear and young and getting a hint of laughter into them once more.

"Are you probs going to stand out there yelling all night?"

"My goodness!" Bianca Laredo gasped, whirling around on her way up the hill with Sabra to see where that sharp question had come from.

Several of the others had stopped in their tracks, their astonishment barely covering their resentment.

"Have you forgotten that some of us are on night duty? And that even the patients across the street might want to sleep?" The voice was less sharp. It was worse than sharp. It was sarcastic. It was contemptuous. There was no use expecting a prob to have any sense, it said unmistakably by implication.

Broad daylight though it was, and outside the

houses though all of them still were, every probationer in the lot tiptoed up the steps to her house and went mously inside.

Only one or two of them heard a pair of graduate nurses chuckle as they came up the walk, and those who did hoped fervently that it would be months before they came upon those particular graduates again.

Sabra and Bianca closed the door quietly behind them and tiptoed into Bianca's tiny room.

"Aren't we goofs?" Sabra giggled when the door was shut.

"Goofs? What is that? Does it mean your feet hurt and your knees hurt, and your hips hurt, and——" She flopped backward on the bed, beckoning Sabra to do the same. "Were you ever so tired in your whole life?" She turned sidewise, her grimace of fatigue changing to a grin. "I'm all in, but I'm mad about it!"

Light coming through the colored-glass window divided their white aprons into purple and yellow and green segments. "Like something in geometry," Sabra said; and they gave thanks to their stars that geometry was not in the Randolph-Macey curriculum, or at least they hoped it was not. Sabra had a purple isosceles triangle, and Bianca had a green one.

"Say, look," Bianca exclaimed, getting off the bed in a single movement that brought her standing. "We've got only eight of these aprons and three blues, and we've done for these already!"

Sabra got up carefully. "We c'n press 'em," she said, twisting to view the back of her apron. "Why didn't you get practical before we sat down there? Are we going over to the dining room for supper? It's due in twenty minutes."

Bianca shook her head. "I'm not hungry."

"Fibber."

"Are you?"

"Not that hungry."

They changed to street clothes and went to a tea room a few blocks away, where for the next hour and a half they undermined the disposition of an attentive waitress by allowing their food to stand uneaten while they tried to recall everything they had seen and heard this first, this exhausting, this marvelous, day, in uniform.

But finally their attention was given to their food, and they were both surprised at the vigor of their appetites. "Half that walk would have made me hungry," Sabra admitted as they selected deserts.

Voices behind them became more distinct now, and they realized that they had been hearing them all the time above their own low-toned conversation. It was almost as if the speaker were trying to include them among her listeners.

"And I thought to myself," she was saying, "that if those boys knew as much about that patient as I do they wouldn't be so puzzled about him."

"Where did you say you were working?" the other voice asked.

"District Court. Back East. Small—but big enough for cases like that. If you were a nurse you'd see what a dramatic situation it is."

"I'd hate the responsibility," the other voice said doubtfully.

Faces at other tables began to turn in that direction, for the first speaker seemed to be on the verge of revealing exciting secrets. She certainly had the attention of nearly everyone within hearing distance.

"This is a bad place for shop talk," Bianca said.

"Mmmm," Sabra agreed. "I wonder if we were broadcasting too?"

"At least we weren't interesting," Bianca replied. "No one even glanced our way."

Chairs were being pushed back at the table behind them, and as the pair passed one of them turned to look down at Sabra and Bianca with a smile which was a mixture of greeting and appraisal and self-introduction.

The glances of the probationers were impersonally courteous in response. It was like being obliged to listen to one of those rehearsed conversations so often heard on the radio, Sabra thought. It had probably been only an effort to attract attention to the speaker personally. The probationers both resented faintly the girl's identification of herself as a nurse, and, while neither of them mentioned it, they each made then and there a firm resolve never to discuss hospital affairs outside of hospital walls.

CHAPTER IX

SABRA and Bianca looked half-heartedly at the electric sign of the moving-picture theater which they must pass as they left the tea room.

"Mmmmmmm?" said Bianca with a humorous lift of eyebrows and shoulders.

"No—not tonight." Sabra made up her mind at once, and Bianca seemed relieved.

"I knew we shouldn't," she said. "We've had enough for one day."

They walked slowly home, each of them frowning slightly at the tugging sensation which had developed for no reason at all in the muscles of the backs of their legs as they went up the hill. Sabra said something about never having noticed that changing the height of her shoe heels would cause so much discomfort. She was quite sure she had changed often enough from tennis shoes to pumps, or vice versa, without distress, and so was Bianca. It must be the hill, they decided. Going up the

house steps after the steep grade was plain hard work.

By the time they had reached the front door they were both ready to admit that they were tired, thoroughly tired, and without any apology whatever. They were among those who planned to practice tomorrow at nine. "Nine seems rather early," Bianca said dubiously. But they stuck to it.

"What are you going to do the rest of this evening?" Sabra asked.

"Prepare," Bianca said. "Horizontally. First in the bathtub, and then in my downy. I'm going to prepare through every one of"—she glanced at her watch—"through every one of eleven solid hours."

"Me too," said Sabra Dunning, disappearing into the big room as Bianca shut the door of her hatbox.

Sunday morning Sabra wakened without the assistance of the alarm clock she had poked under her mattress, and she felt quite proud of herself. She had an idea that an alarm clock might become very unpopular in a room where all the rest had apparently trained themselves to get along without one. It was five minutes of six. Four of her roommates were still sleeping. Miss Borland's bed, across the fireplace from her own, was still made up, since she had not yet returned from night duty. Sabra went out to the bathroom and came back without wakening any of the sleepers. A little later she wondered if she should waken them, decided

against it, and sat on the edge of her bed, her feet swinging, to brush her ungovernable hair.

Anna Webber sat up so suddenly that Sabra almost laughed. Without speaking Miss Webber went out, dragging on a bath robe, her slippers making a soft hissing sound on the bare floor. None of the others stirred.

When Miss Webber came back Sabra was making her bed.

"You'll get over that before long," Miss Webber said.

"Get over what?" Miss Lacey demanded drowsily, sitting up.

"She's turning her mattress." Miss Webber pointed.

Miss Streeter sat up then, staring at Sabra. "How long shall we give her?"

"More than three minutes, I hope," Sabra said, her face somewhat pink. Why all this concentration on her bed making, she was wondering. "Do you think I'd dare not turn the mattress?" she asked them, working fast with what she hoped were 'capable hands.'

"Dare?" Miss Streeter asked. "Here. Watch. I'll show you something." She took hold of the head of her bed with both hands, pulling her body up, bent her knees, and with a quick jump was out of the long envelope made by the covers and standing on the floor, barefooted. A swift reaching, brushing stroke with a flat palm the full length of the bed, a quick jerk of all the covers at once, a speedy

repair of the mitres in the spread at the foot, a clod and a slap on the pillow, and the bed was "made."

"There. You'd better learn it. It'll save you a great many hours for sleep in three years. Rip it open on your short day."

"Does it feel fresh when you get into it?" Sabra asked, wondering if she could find out what a short day was without asking.

"Oh, fresh enough," came from Miss Markey's bed, following a wide, sleepy yawn. "You get too tired to care."

Sabra never quite understood how the others got out of bed, attended to their bathroom chores, and got into uniform as quickly as they did. Before she knew it she was alone in the room and realizing for the first time that they had slept with all the windows closed. Perhaps it was just as well that there was a draft from the fireplace. Things would doubtless be quite different when the new Nurses' Home was finished. But somehow Sabra was glad that she had entered training while conditions were as she found them now.

Some training schools had nurses' homes with a separate room for each student, Miss Wilbur had said. But there were still many hospitals in the country which had either something on the order of the present Randolph-Macey housing, or else the students were obliged to find living quarters wherever they could in the community in which the hospital was located. Hospitalization facilities

were far from adequate throughout the nation, she said, and patients must come first.

Sabra had an idea that if all their days 'on duty' were as full as yesterday had been they would want nothing of the Nurses' Home but a place to sleep. There would not be either time or energy for anything else. She put her coat on and her hat and went to tap on Bianca Laredo's door, walking unevenly and in a faint but irritating discomfort. If I didn't know better, she thought, I'd think I'd been in the saddle all day yesterday after months of no riding. You wouldn't suppose that one block of steep hill could do that to you.

"Oh-h," Bianca groaned, opening her door and turning back to her mirror. "Are you lame all over?"

"We'd better do some brisk walking today, if I know anything about it," Sabra said. They almost ran to that tea room again, they were so brisk, seeking breakfast.

At nine they were in uniform and entering the classroom, where for the next two hours they practiced making unoccupied beds, ether beds, beds with patients in them—the patients being various probationers who declared that they were delighted to be of service. Even bed making seemed to be able to discover muscles you didn't know you had.

"No fair going to sleep now," Madge Lennox told them, "so you can't tell us what we do that's wrong."

"I never whispered for so long in my life!" Miss Stone remarked as they brought their practice period to a close. They had not started "at a whisper," but they had been careful to keep their voices down, right from the first. The cause of the whispering came after they had been at work nearly half an hour. Four of them were industriously making beds, and the other four were just as industriously observing their technique—all eight faces as serious as if their entire careers in nursing depended upon this moment. The classroom door had opened without their hearing it, and as it was something curiously like a chuckle which startled them into turning just in time to see a three-inch vertical strip of white uniform, face, dark hair, and white cap as the door closed again.

The probationers looked at each other. Have we missed doing something that we should have done? All eyes turned to Miss Lennox. It was she who had suggested that one person get permission for all of them, since they all wanted to practice. Their names had been neatly printed on a slip of paper, and Miss Lennox herself had been delegated to represent them, asking if they might use the classroom and its equipment. They had waited in Macey Entrance until she had beckoned them. Could something have been omitted that they should have attended to? None of them could think of anything, so they went back to work.

And now they were ready to stop practicing for today. "You can practice anything too much,

I think," Sabra said. "I mean when it's just practicing. I learn easier when I'm going to do something with what I learn. Right then." They went along the corridor and down the two flights of steps to Macey First with such quietness that only the rhythmic flutter of their aprons could be heard to tell of their descent.

"Good morning," a pleasant voice greeted them as they arrived, and they returned the greeting with careful voices, standing alert and courteous before this nurse in white who stood facing them.

"I am Miss Murray," the graduate said, and they all knew that this was the assistant superintendent of nurses. "Did you get along all right with your practice? I think I've never seen such concentration." She was amused at them, but a warm friendliness shone through her amusement as they answered her. "Fine," she said. "And isn't it a glorious day?"

About four-thirty that afternoon, sitting in the car beside Galen, bound for the beach highway, Sabra recalled that remark, and it struck her then for the first time that Miss Murray might have been suggesting that they make the most of it. There was not even a fleck of fog to be seen. The day had been and still was glorious.

"Let's park somewhere and get out and hike," Sabra said.

"Hike?" Galen looked at her. "I should think after your ten miles you'd be glad to sit down."

"What ten miles? I haven't done any ten miles."

"Oh, haven't you? It's about ten miles—that tour of Wilbur's, I mean. Not counting the up-and-down steps."

"Galen, you're nuts! We'd've had to run every step of the way to do ten miles in the time we took!"

"Maybe you didn't do the whole place then. But we clocked it once. The Head making rounds for one day's duty goes pretty close to that."

"You're spoofing me!" (*Making rounds*, another phrase to remember.)

"Didn't it lame you at all?"

Only then did Sabra see the quirk in his mouth. "Meany! And I thought it didn't show."

"Shows in your eyebrows," Galen said.

"So my eyebrows limp when my legs're stiff, hmm."

"Ummm."

"Then I'd better watch my eyebrows."

"Right."

"What are you getting at, Doctor Trent?"

"They're tattletales." He slowed the car, hunting a spot where he could get off the pavement. "You really want to walk?"

"Of course. I'd better walk a good long way, too, and learn how to keep my face from showing my hinges are rusty." That was something which she had never thought much about. She knew Galen was only teasing her, but when she considered it, she knew, too, that the apparent calmness of such faces as Miss Wilbur's and Miss MacLaren's and Miss Murray's was probably not

merely a natural calmness. It was something they had learned. "One thing more to practice," she said under her breath.

"What now?" Galen bumped the car across the graveled road shoulder. "What have you got to practice?"

"Not making faces," Sabra replied, making a very funny one straight at him.

"You haven't been given any orders yet?" Galen asked later as they were swinging along on the wet sand, leaving a scalloped trail behind them because they had to dash out of the water's way at every white-ruffled surge of the tide. "Haven't they laid down any laws?"

"Laws! My word, don't suggest that there are any more!" Sabra pulled off her beret and let the wind stand her hair on end. "What do you mean, orders?" But he would say no more and instead challenged her to race him to a driftwood log way down the beach. Sabra called him a wretch, but she set out at her best speed. If any kind of exercise would cure her lameness this should. Galen's hat blew off, and he had to dash back to get it, but even then he reached the log first and stood upon it, urging her on.

With the last sweep of his arm a piece of rotten wood broke off the log, and he went with it. Sabra came up, her flat hand shielding her eyes, as if she were searching the distance for signals. "Calling Doctor Trent!" she shouted to the white-capped sea. "Calling Doctor Trent! Oh, there you are. Dig-

ging clams, Doctor? How nicely that sand mingles with your tweed." But the broken bits of driftwood gave her an idea which kept them both busy for the next hour. If they could just find enough driftwood, she told Galen, there could be a real fire in the fireplace of Room 10 in House 16 that night.

Each of them had an armful of sand-damp sticks and blocks when it occurred to Galen to look at his watch and consider how far back they had left the car. If they were going to have dinner together they must be starting back. He wanted to take Sabra's part of the load, but she would not let him have it. The rising tide chased them higher and higher.

"We must have come a mile or more!" Sabra called, jumping a tongue of foamy water.

"Two miles or more, you mean."

"Then I'm getting used to mileage. I'm not tired at all." Something occurred to her then that she had not thought of before. "I bet it was those tiled floors!" she exclaimed, forgetting Galen.

"No-o!" he sang, understanding fully. "But you'll get used to them in a few weeks."

They stacked their driftwood in the back of the car and flexed their tired arms to rest them. "I'm rather untidy to go to dinner anywhere." Sabra eyed the marks the wood had made, but Galen vetoed the suggestion that she go home and change. "We're all right," he insisted. "I know a place where we won't run into anybody."

"I'm not that concerned about my appearance,"

Sabra told him. Run into anybody? What did he mean? "Is my face dirty?"

No, her face wasn't dirty, and he knew a place where they could get some swell fried chicken. As they drove he told her his good news. It had come by wire just last night. He was to be stationed at the big base hospital at the fort, right here in the city. "Isn't that a break?" It was more than either of them had dared hope for. It meant that he would not have to go away—which was very important to both of them—but it was an excellent appointment, too, and would be priceless to him in his work.

"Father would have been so proud of you!" she said impulsively.

"Have you told them anything—about us, I mean?" Galen asked.

"No, I wanted to stand on my own feet. Not that I mean I think they would pamper me because of Father, but—but—I've got to measure up to the mark entirely on my own. You see that, don't you?" She wondered if it didn't sound silly when it was talked about, but she knew what it meant to her privately.

"Yes. I see it. You'll do it, too. And I know he'd like this base-hospital business." Galen changed the subject's focus tactfully. "If it hadn't been for him I'd never have made it. Those jobs I did with Doctor Dunning gave me a groundwork in diagnosis that I wouldn't have got in years otherwise. There are few who could match him in that field."

Sabra opened the unsealed hospital envelope which was propped up on her chiffonier when she reached home that night, and a quick look of relief passed over her face when she saw that it contained only a mimeographed sheet. There seemed to be so many *nevers* and *alwayses* about hospital customs that the unexpectedness of that envelope had set her to wondering first off what they could have done in the practice room that was wrong. She knew that most of the other probationers felt as she did about this new environment. Madge Lennox, with her brusque sense of humor and her positive manner, was the only one of the group, Sabra thought, who was not just a little bit scared.

She held the mimeographed sheet to the light, thinking that Miss Lennox had sense enough to know that not every eye in the hospital was watching the probationers. "We're just funny, I guess." Sabra's forehead wrinkled; the stencil must have blurred, for the first few lines of type were difficult to read. Oh. It was just a list of the rules Miss Wilbur had already told them about. Well, it was good to have them all together. She read on, 8, 9, 10. "Whoof, what a lot of them! Eleven. *What?*" The wrinkles deepened. "Why, they can't mean that! What will we *do?*" It was a dismayed cry, even if it was a whisper.

"'S matter?" Another whisper came from the door as Miss Markey arrived, peeling off her uniform as she came.

"Oh. Good evening, Miss Markey," Sabra

whispered back, still feeling dazed. "I'm sorry. Did you ask me something?"

"Nothing important. I said what's the matter? You looked so funny." Enid Markey tossed her apron on the bed and leaned to see more clearly the envelope Sabra was holding out. "My goodness, Prob! You haven't been getting a note from the office already, have you? I thought we were bringing you up so carefully too."

"It's only a set of rules," Sabra said, holding that out now suggestively, pointing with it to Miss Borland's bed. She did not want to waken her.

Miss Markey went down the room to her own bed, and Sabra went along. "Yes-s, only a set of rules," Miss Markey whispered. "The joker is that you never get a copy of 'em unless you've been misbehaving."

"Misbehaving!" Sabra said, almost aloud, and stopped abruptly at the look on Miss Markey's face. "I can only say I'm sorry," she finished more quietly. "I thought I paid very careful attention to everything Miss Wilbur said."

"Anything on the list that you didn't hear her say?" Miss Markey's low question suggested a way out of this uncomfortable situation.

"Yes, there is," Sabra admitted and was relieved that Miss Markey dismissed the matter with a shrug.

"That's not so bad then," the junior said. "Just explain that you hadn't been told and be careful not to do it again. Gee, I've got eight minutes before

my date!" She began a hurried but almost noiseless opening and shutting of drawers, was out of the room and back in a few moments more, and in no time at all, it seemed to Sabra, was dressed for the street. "Look, Miss Dunning," she said as she put on her gloves, "if Borland isn't up by ten to eleven you call her, will you, if you're awake?"

"Of course," Sabra promised, still unused to this last-name-only custom of her room-mates. Ten minutes seemed to her awfully scant time before being due at the hospital. But the thought of Miss Borland's duty hours faded from her mind when she was alone with the sleeping senior and the empty beds. What was she going to do if she could not have any social engagements with Galen? No social engagements with the man whom she was going to marry? What difference did it make to her that he was an interne? Didn't they suppose she had any sense at all? As if she would allow social engagements to interfere with her work. It was as if all the light, all the enthusiasm, all the ambition, in their plans had suddenly been blacked out.

For that was what Rule 11 said. She read it again to make sure that she had not misread it, though she knew she had not. There it was, in the plainest of plain English. Rule 11. *At no time during the probationary period may a student nurse have social engagements with men of the interne staff.*

There it was. You could not make it mean anything but what it said. Galen was an interne. She

was a timid knock on the open door. She flipped back under the covers and said, "What is it, please?" to the hand and bare arm which were all she could see of the visitor.

A dark head leaned in, and a puzzled voice said, "I'm Janet Borland. Do I live here?" Then she came on in. "Where *did* you get that wood?"

"Beach combing," Sabra told her. "Aren't the colors nice? I'd forgotten there'd be colors."

"Imagine! A fire to dress by! This will set me up for the whole night. Ummm, what a prob we've got!"

That reminded Sabra. Should she spoil the pleasure of the fire by asking whom you explained to? Maybe such a question would not spoil the fire for Miss Borland. She decided to risk it; she did not want to fidget all night. "Yes, look at what a prob you've got." She held out the list of rules.

Miss Borland glanced up from her buttoning, and the speed with which her face changed made Sabra feel suddenly cold, fire or no fire. "Which one did you break?" the senior asked finally.

"Eleven."

"My word! You're beginning early."

(Does everyone know them by heart? Sabra asked herself.) "This is the first I'd heard of it," she said aloud. "To whom does one explain?"

"One explains to Miss MacLaren—right formally, too, let me assure you. The formality will begin with a note you'll get in the morning. Here, if you're lucky. But if you're not lucky it will be on

the bulletin board by the dining room at breakfast maybe, or maybe later. You can erase it when you've read it," she added, as if there were some bleak satisfaction in being able to erase it.

"Good heavens! Bulletin board! Do you mean they——?"

"Oh, not the broken rule." Miss Borland smiled faintly. "I mean there'll be a notice for you—if you don't get a note here first. It will say, 'Miss Dunning'—maybe Sabra Dunning—'will report to the superintendent of nurses at so-and-so'—and it's wise to be prompt. Don't let it panic you. If this really is your first collision with that rule it may not be so bad. But that's the very worst rule of all to break, I may as well tell you. You ought to be asleep." Miss Borland's cap was in place, and she looked down at Sabra. "It's been a lovely fire," she said. "Thank you for lighting it." And she was gone.

I can erase my name after I've seen it there, Sabra tried to reassure herself, contemplating the possibility of this indignity. Since it was her first offense she hoped that Miss MacLaren would send a note, instead. What would Galen think, seeing her name on that bulletin board the very first thing? Would he see it, she wondered. The door to the internes' dining room was down the corridor a little. He could, if he looked, she decided. He should have told her about that rule, if he knew about it—and yet she had an idea that Galen would be inclined to scoff at such a restriction for

his own part, even though she knew that he would not expect her to violate it. How many other people would see her name on the bulletin board? How many different speculations would there be as to the reason for it?

"What rubbish!" she told herself sharply. "Don't be so silly. You didn't know it was a rule. If it is a rule you'll naturally obey it and make the best of it and say you're sorry you didn't know, and you won't break it again."

But what about not seeing Galen? The question prodded at her. I guess I can't, she answered it, and switched out her light. She lay there on her face, gazing down into the small fire. Not see him privately for the whole period of her probation? For that was when his internship would end. Not see him until he was a United States army doctor?

The lost feeling that had almost overwhelmed her at her father's death came back like a cloud, and it took real effort to remind herself that after Galen was at the Base Hospital he would no longer be an interne. "But I need to see him!" she whispered huskily into her pillow. "I need to see him, and that's weeks and weeks away!"

The other girls came in again—either off duty or off date, as they expressed it—and they had their share of the fire, stoking it themselves from the pile by the door. Sabra dozed, and dreamed of a bulletin board as big as Randolph wall, with her name on it in huge black letters and Rule 11 following in huge red letters.

About half-past one fire apparatus roared past on the street below. Siren after siren screamed. Sabra listened a moment and then got up and went to the window at the end of the room. A dull red glow down the hill put the nearer buildings in dark silhouette. It grew brighter as she watched. A great pyramid of sparks rose and the acrid smell of smoke reached all the way to where she sat. There was a sudden roar and the glow died abruptly, only to flare again, more brilliantly.

Sabra huddled on her chair, her elbows on the window sill, watching. Men appeared in grotesque crouching attitudes on roofs. Curved white lines of water cut across the smoke, pulsing a little. On the sidewalk below her several people were running. She sat and watched until the glow had entirely disappeared.

The apparatus came back up the street, siren moaning half-heartedly. Why do they make that awful noise? she thought, climbing back into bed. "They'll worry every patient in the hospital, and the fire was a block away. How long did it take a probationer to learn to go to sleep promptly? Not another girl in the room had stirred for all that row.

"Maybe Rule 11 doesn't matter to them," she murmured; "that's how they can sleep. I never got the jitters like this over little things at the ranch. What's the matter with me?"

CHAPTER X

SABRA made a point of getting to the dining room early Monday morning. If there was any notice on the bulletin board with her name attached to it she intended to read it—and erase it—before anyone else saw it. Of course the bus boys and dining-room staff would have to see it, but they might not know who, or rather which, she was. But if being early would accomplish anything she intended to make sure no nurse saw it.

She sped along the corridor of Macey Fourth like a wraith with a guilty conscience, the flutter of her apron filling the place with unusual noise. Not a single one of the maids and porters usually in that corridor had yet taken a place there. Thumpity-thump-thump her rubber heels hit the ramp, and she turned the corner into the dining-room corridor so rapidly that her apron slapped against the wall. She gave it a quick half-seeing sweep with her hand in case the contact had made a mark. An untidy uniform seemed almost a secondary matter this gray morning.

The bulletin board was a complete smooth green blank, all the way from top to bottom, from side to side. Not a line, not a word, not a dot, not a chalk mark of any sort was on it beneath the formal heading. The heading, TRAINING SCHOOL BULLETIN BOARD, had been put on with paint, white paint, she saw as she stared at it. And the breath which she must have been holding ever since she left her room, she thought, escaped in one long sigh.

"You run alla de way, huh?" Ralph's impudent question came at her from behind.

She whirled and gave him a cold look and went quickly into the dining room.

"You musta be hongry." His voice again, from the serving kitchen, this time amused, oily.

There was not a single chair occupied. The windows were a shiny gray horseshoe enclosing the broader-than-usual expanses of tablecloth. The gray was fog, she saw, and was astonished at herself for not having noticed on the way across the street that it was as foggy as that.

"No breakfas' till ha'f-pas' seex," Ralph assured her at her elbow.

"All right," she said distinctly, trying to fill her tone with dismissal.

"You getta up much early," he commented genially, straightening chairs unnecessarily.

Sabra glanced at her watch, twisted to check it against the dining-room clock which was over the door, and somewhat ostentatiously pulled out the

stem, turned the hands all the way around, and set them with the dining-room clock—exactly as they had been before. It was a ruse, but it had its effect, and she found a foolish satisfaction in Ralph's comment.

"The watcha go wrong, hey?" He gave a chair a scrape with his foot. "I bring somepin. Purty quick breakfas' time anyway." He came back a moment later with a cup of coffee, hot milk, and one slice of crisp toast and put them down before her.

"Thank you very much," she said courteously, impersonally, keeping him in his place, recognizing the kindness. And as she buttered the toast, wondering if she could make it hold out for the whole ten minutes until six-thirty unless she ate it crumb by crumb, it struck her that there might prove to be advantages in arriving on the dot for breakfast. But certainly not before the dot.

"Well, I don't expect to get on the bulletin again," she said, lifting the steaming coffee with its false creamed tint which came from the hot milk.

A dozen or two nurses arrived finally with a single swish of the double doors, and Madge Lennox plopped cheerfully into the chair beside Sabra.

"Any worms left?" she demanded, eying Sabra's plate. "Gee, nothing but toast and coffee for breakfast today? I need more than that."

"You goin' to get it." Ralph was there, putting down bacon, more toast, two heavy bowls of cereal,

hot milk. The bacon was browned. Both girls noticed it.

"Did somebody post you to come early?" Madge Lennox asked, her glance indicating the more pleasing aspect of the bacon. It had been very pale before.

"No." Sabra shook her head. "I haven't been posted." And her giggle was so nearly hysterical that Miss Lennox turned to look at her.

The two girls ate hurriedly, for all they were early. Sabra forced herself to drink a second cup of coffee, though she wanted to shove back her chair and race out into the corridor again, to see if there was anything on the bulletin board now. She studied the face of each probationer who came to sit across from her. Had any of them seen anything? But she could not tell. She did not get up to leave until Madge Lennox did, and by that time every chair in the dining room was occupied, except those at the staff tables.

It was ten minutes of seven when the first exodus began, and Sabra and Miss Lennox were part of it. Something seemed to slow them down at the doorway; it took several seconds for them all to get through. Not until she was out in the corridor did Sabra discover what the cause was—a graduate nurse whom she had not seen before was standing before the bulletin board, writing busily with a squeaky piece of chalk.

"Hmmm," said Madge Lennox. "Let's wait and see if there's anything for us."

"All right," said Sabra meekly. Miss Wilbur had told them to notice the bulletin each time in and out of the dining room, she remembered. She could not very well say she was not interested. Anyway, she thought, nobody knows how interested I really am. The squeaky chalk wrote on. It was impossible to see all of the board if they were to avoid completely obstructing the narrow passage. Others joined them, standing silently, a little gravely, watching, waiting.

At last the squeaking stopped; a brief smile came on the graduate's face as she glanced at them before disappearing beyond the dining-room doors.

"Nope," Madge Lennox said. "Nothing for us. We've got to scram."

Sabra wanted to run down the corridor, she was so relieved. Maybe there was not going to be a notice for her. How silly she had been. She should have known when there was no note at the house that the matter was going to be dropped. Before she had arrived at the classroom she had begun to feel quite herself again, and her revived sense of humor had put a belated sparkle in her eyes.

Miss Wilbur came in, and even before they were back in their seats again every probationer in the room had noted how serious she looked this gray Monday morning. They sat silent while she glanced them over—taking roll, they knew. She picked up a note pad from the desk, read it, and said, "I'll be back in a moment. Stay as you are."

The buzz started instantly when the doors closed. "Monday-morning blues!" somebody said. "Bad as grade school!" Someone else said, "We'll soon find out, I bet you." "We're not children. The idea of being afraid of a sober face." "She hasn't looked like that before that I've seen." (They all had to agree to that one.) "Well, my goodness," Bianca Laredo said at last, her voice clear and full of laughter, "we're not the only thing Miss Wilbur has to think about! There must be plenty of things to make an instructor look serious around a place like this."

That seemed to reassure them, and as Bianca leaned to speak to Sabra they began chattering in little groups, each to those nearest, but Sabra had to swallow before she could reply to Bianca's question. It would be perfectly awful, she was thinking, if Miss Wilbur had to tell her to go to the office about Rule 11.

Then Miss Wilbur was back, bringing her seriousness with her and, in addition, a sheaf of mimeographed sheets.

"I was right!" Sabra breathed audibly, eying those stenciled pages as the instructor laid them on the desk.

"I'm sorry to keep you waiting," Miss Wilbur said. "There is a slight change in schedule necessary. We are going to have to hurry our practice in some of the fundamentals you have already learned. But first there is something else I must discuss with you."

Sabra, who had begun to relax, tightened up again abruptly as Miss Wilbur's fingers reached for the mimeographed sheets. "I have here," Miss Wilbur was saying, "a list of training-school rules about things not directly concerned with your work with the hospital patients."

Dingbust it all! Galen's pet phrase of objection was a soundless cry deep in Sabra Dunning's thoughts. All right. She sat a little straighter and put a forced smile across her mouth. I'm ready. Bring on your elephants, but for pity's sake, be quick! But if Miss Wilbur heard her thoughts she gave no sign.

"The rules are clearly stated," the instructor said calmly. "They must, of course, be obeyed. There are occasions or circumstances, now and then, in which a modification of a rule can be made. There is, however, only one procedure to follow if any of the rules is to be set aside. One, and only one. It is this. If at some time—and let me warn you that such times can be very rare—if at some time you feel that one rule or another works a very great hardship upon you, you may then ask for an appointment with Miss MacLaren for the purpose of putting the case to her. Only the superintendent of nurses has the authority to set aside one of these rules. You are expected to familiarize yourselves thoroughly with them, and, as I said a moment ago, to obey them to the letter. Will you each take one copy and pass the rest

on?" She handed the stack to Sabra, who was sitting, as usual, on the end of the front row.

Sabra took off one sheet and sat down again, wondering if her face was really—could really be—as red as it felt.

Miss Wilbur left that subject abruptly, even before each probationer had her sheet of rules, and her voice rose a little above the surreptitious crackle of paper as the pages were folded and slipped into the blue chambray pockets beneath those fresh white aprons.

"Now"—the instructor's voice was brisk and practical again—"our change of schedule spells linen closets for all of us. The linen closets are the sock darning of the hospital. There is always linen, and there is almost always some to be put away. I was the youngest of a family of nine—and the other eight were brothers. So you may be sure I know something about sock darning, and I speak advisedly when I say that the linen of a hospital is like that."

Each ward and each floor, she told them, had its own linen closet. Some of the closets were very large, some small. They were all equipped with shelves and either drawers or cupboards. The drawers or cupboards were used for blankets and pillows, the shelves for sheets, pillowcases—*"And what else, Miss Dunning?"*

Sabra gulped and stood up. "For sheets, Miss Wilbur, and pillowcases and towels—both hand

and bath towels—for face cloths and bath cloths, for cotton drawsheets, for——” She squinted, trying to think of another item of hospital linen she might have met with so far. “I think that is all I know at present, Miss Wilbur.”

“Yes.” Miss Wilbur granted that, giving her a keen glance, as if to say: You did not seem to be paying attention, Miss Dunning.

“I’m sorry,” Sabra murmured, admitting the unspoken charge, and Miss Wilbur laughed outright.

“Never mind,” she said. “If you can always catch yourself that fast you’re fairly safe, I suppose. But it’s not the best practice.” (She knows all about it, Sabra was thinking. She knows I’m scared to death.) Miss Wilbur, however, went right on about the linen closets, and Sabra forced herself to concentrate on them to the exclusion of everything else.

“We’ll practice in a linen closet on an unfinished corridor in Randolph,” Miss Wilbur said. “We can talk there. Laundry deliveries are made daily at four o’clock, except on Saturday, when they are made before noon. Are there any questions before we go? We have not much time.”

Miss Schramm wanted to know if each of them would go to a separate linen closet, after the practicing was finished, and was told yes, certainly, because there were more linen closets than there were probationers. “Some of you may have to do two.”

"How soon do we have to be through, Miss Wilbur?"

That would depend upon the size of the closet. Miss Wilbur controlled a smile. They would be given ample time to finish, she said. "You go off duty at five-thirty today."

"Oh-h. Thank you, Miss Wilbur." Miss Schramm sat down, her voice and her face both saying that she was still puzzled. "But what do we do with ourselves all the time between?"

"You listen to me," said Miss Wilbur demurely and laughed with her class. In a few days, she told them, most of the strangeness would have passed. They would discover that there is never a moment in a hospital when any nurse is at a loss for something to do. The problem was how to get everything done that must be done.

"The sooner you can feel yourselves a part of the hospital, the more quickly you will become of value here. At present you are only minor cogs, perhaps, in the complex machinery of Randolph-Macey, but you know what happens if one cog in a machine gets out of line. Now unless there is some further question which is important, we will go to our linen-closet practice."

The silence which followed this was, in itself, a comment upon the adroitness with which the instructor had slipped in that word "important." The expression of Miss Wilbur's eyes changed from faintly amused evaluation to her usual impersonal alertness. "We shall proceed in threes," she said,

and every one of them tried to move as quietly and swiftly as she did on the way to the door.

* * *

"Mmm! Smells good!" Madge Lennox whispered to Sabra as Miss Wilbur opened the linen-closet door and pressed the mechanical stop in place with her foot to hold it open. The probationers formed a block in the doorway, the short ones in front.

On the floor were two very large wicker baskets of clean linen. Three walls of the closet were shelves above a broad counter, drawers and cupboards below. The wood was new and pale and varnished.

Miss Wilbur took a hand towel from one of the baskets, calling their attention to how it had been folded at the laundry. She laid it on the counter and folded it slow motion. "See? This way. Always." Then she folded it again, with what she said was normal speed. She lifted up all the hand towels, folding them in what seemed no time at all, placing them in a perfect stack on the shelf.

"My goodness!" Bianca Laredo exclaimed, lowering her hand from her watch.

"No fair timing me!" Miss Wilbur said without looking around.

"I never will again, Miss Wilbur. I'd be too discouraged about myself."

Bath towels were next. Again the slow-motion demonstration. She folded all of them and placed them on the shelf. "No matter where the closet is," she said, "the hand towels, the bath towels, must be

just where I have put them with relation to the door. Always. And so with all linen. *Why*, Miss Lennox?"

Miss Lennox answered quietly: "So a nurse will have no trouble and lose no time finding what she wants, Miss Wilbur."

"You see"—Miss Wilbur's voice had a note of approval in it—"a little thing like that can come to be a mountain when it is multiplied by the number of nurses there are in the hospital."

The probationers nodded their understanding. There was something comfortable and reassuring about having a definite way to do everything. Once that way was learned, things should go quite smoothly.

Miss Wilbur folded everything in the baskets—towels, pillowcases, sheets, hot-water-bottle covers, binders, swathes, spreads. There had been a heavy layer of these on the second basket. They must be handled with especial care, she said. "Nothing makes a bed look more untidy than an untidy spread."

Finally the shelves were laden and the baskets were empty, and the probationers looked boldly at their watches and gasped. It just wasn't possible. They'd never learn to be that fast. Miss Wilbur straightened, lifted her arms, and to their utter amazement began unfolding all that linen again and stowing it back into the baskets. The return was finished even more rapidly than the folding. She kept her face sober through it all.

She even put the dust covers back on the baskets.

"Now, Miss Laredo, Miss Stone, you will each take a basket and put this linen away."

By the time they had all had a turn at it Miss Wilbur considered that at least they knew what to do. Better doing, faster doing, she said, would come only with practice. This would be a practice closet for a few days. They might practice, with the usual restrictions, whenever they had time. She thought it must be about lunch time now. They looked at their watches, and it was.

"I feel as if I'd been running all morning," Bianca Laredo whispered to Erna Schramm.

"Me too," said Miss Schramm, patting her flushed face.

"You will feel better if you dash in and wash up before lunch," Miss Wilbur said, and told them where to find the nurses' rest room on this still-unfinished floor. "Class at 1 P.M."

"Paper towels! After all that folding!" someone cried as the last girl crowded into the rest room. "But does cold water feel good!" They sighed collectively and wriggled their blue shoulders beneath the broad white straps and rose on their toes a moment in their new duty shoes, and finally someone chuckled. "We're like a freight train settling down on a siding."

"Whoo-osh, whoo-osh, whoo-osh!" said Madge Lennox softly, making exaggerated strides toward the door. "Model of a freight-train engine heading for the diner! Anybody hooking on?"

They lock-stepped out of that rest room, hands on the aproned hips ahead, their footfalls muted, their faces mischievous, and "choo-chooed" down the unfinished corridor. But they broke abruptly into dignified ranks of threes as they came to the cross corridor. There were carpenters working there. In the elevators an outsider would have thought that they had come directly from the most desperate ward in the hospital. They went down the ramp like a troop of fluttering sleuths, so silent were their steps. They rounded the bend into the short dining-room corridor with their ranks unbroken.

"My good hat, that bulletin board!" gasped Sabra Dunning from somewhere in the midst of them.

But once again there was nothing concerning any of them in all the chalky legends.

After lunch Sabra dashed across to her room for a fresh handkerchief. There was a letter from Della. Mr. Mason had had some trouble with the tractor and plow. He had hooked into a hidden ridge of rock. It happened while Ted was at the village, but no serious damage had been done.

My goodness! Sabra thought. I should have remembered to tell him about that ridge! No one would suspect it was there. We always plow shallowly there. I can't expect Ted to remember everything. And, oh dear! I can't be thinking about the ranch now, either, or I'll be haywire in class. She dropped the letter into a drawer and shut it

soundlessly for Miss Borland's sake. But for all the concern it aroused, Della's letter with its old-fashioned script and sometimes quaint spelling sent a flood of warmth through her. Della knew that homesickness was inevitable. She was doing what she could to help.

CHAPTER XI

THE AFTERNOON SESSION of the class began with a review of the routine for admitting a clinic patient to the hospital. The probationers examined the various forms and blanks which must be filled out for this non-paying patient.

"Miss Wilbur, who writes what goes on this history blank?"

"The examining physician."

"Oh—I didn't see how we could find out that much about a patient." But nobody laughed. And none of them knew how funny that sounded to Miss Wilbur.

They were told about the routine laboratory specimens which were required for each patient. They learned that the temperature, pulse, and respiration were always recorded at the time of admission.

"Before the patient is in bed, Miss Wilbur? Or afterward?"

"Which would you think?"

A moment's hesitation, then several certain "afterwards."

"Right. Why?"

"Anybody would be excited, just coming into a hospital."

Step by step Miss Wilbur took them through the routine of admitting a clinic patient who was able to walk into the ward. They spent a few moments learning about hot-water bottles. Boiling water was never used, they learned. They were surprised to hear that even with the cover on, and with the water well below the boiling point, a patient could sustain a severe burn from a hot-water bottle.

"Now," said Miss Wilbur eventually, "we will dramatize what we have learned. We will assume that I am the head nurse in the ward. I have received word from the admitting office by telephone that a new patient is arriving. Bed 3 is made up. Miss Schramm, will you prepare the bed for the patient?"

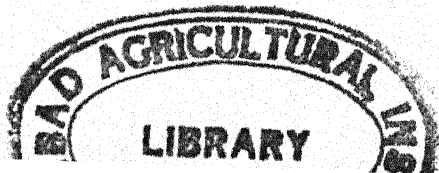
With commendable speed, the others thought, Miss Schramm opened the bed and placed two hot-water bottles in it, one at the foot and one at the center.

Miss Wilbur then said that the training in admitting a patient would be more effective if they had a real patient. Matilda could neither complain nor praise, she said. Who would volunteer?

There was a barely perceptible hesitation, then several volunteered at once. Miss Wilbur chose Miss Stone. She asked Sabra to take the part of the nurse from the admitting office. "You are a graduate nurse, Miss Dunning, bringing the patient into the ward, about which she knows nothing and which she has not seen before. I am still the ward head nurse. You may come through that door." She indicated the small room adjoining the classroom. Sabra and Miss Stone went into it and waited. Miss Wilbur asked Miss Laredo to 'admit' the patient and signaled Sabra to bring Miss Stone in.

All of the smile was gone from both girls' faces. Miss Stone looked very tired and a little wobbly. Sabra had a rather firm grip on her arm. They walked across the empty stretch of classroom, directly toward Miss Wilbur. Sabra's eyes were on this pro-tem head nurse, who was rising from her chair at the desk and coming toward them. The patient's eyes were wandering and a little afraid, with well-assumed apprehension. The probationers in the audience held their breath.

"We have your bed all nice and warm for you, Miss Stone," Sabra was saying quietly, completely ignoring everyone else until she was within three feet of the 'head nurse,' who was by now standing quite near the bed the patient was to occupy. Then Sabra said, "Miss Wilbur, this is Miss Stone, Doctor Jones' patient." She handed Miss Wilbur the admission sheet from the office.



The 'head nurse' greeted the patient and spoke to Miss Laredo, addressing her by name. "Will you help Miss Stone get to bed?"

The patient was assisted in undressing and in putting on a hospital nightingale. At last she lay peacefully in the warmed bed, her head on the fresh pillow, having a very difficult time to keep up the semblance of illness. She had her temperature taken, her pulse and her respiration counted, all the while restraining an impish desire to breathe too fast for counting. She was asked if she would like a drink of water, and it was brought. A window blind was lowered to keep the light from striking directly in her eyes. Finally she was asked if she was quite comfortable, and Miss Laredo looked as if she were about to go back to the ward desk and do her charting, taking her temperature tray with her.

"I'm pretty comfortable," Miss Stone said weakly. "But my feet are wet. And something's poking me in the back."

"Your feet are wet!" Miss Laredo's hand went under the sheet like a saber thrust.

Miss Stone shivered very realistically.

"Oh—are my hands cold? I'm so sorry!"

That last bit was too much for the class, for it was quite clear that there was no acting about it. They laughed. Miss Laredo fished out Miss Schramm's soppy hot-water bottle, removed the soaked cover, tightened and tested the stopper, put on a fresh cover, said, "Change sheet?" at Miss

Wilbur (who shook her head, No), and put the water bottle into the bed again. "Now," she said, "what's poking you in the back?"

That got another laugh.

It was the knots of the nightingale strings, they discovered. Miss Laredo had not wanted it to come unfastened. She untied the strings, while her patient shivered again, and had to look to Miss Wilbur for help. "Miss Wilbur, there's a better way to tie them?" Yes, there was. Miss Wilbur showed them. "Oh, that's better. Thank you."

Miss Stone lay back, immensely pleased with herself and her position, while the rest of them learned how to take care of the clothes she had been wearing and whatever small possessions she might have brought into the hospital with her. Since she was a ward patient, everything must be listed. Every single thing, no matter whether it looked valuable or not. And each item of clothing must be listed. The clothing must be respectfully handled, Miss Wilbur said. "Most patients" (she cast a sidewise glance at Miss Schramm) "come into the hospital wearing the clothes in which they feel they will make a good impression."

Coats and dresses were put on hangers; undergarments were folded. Stockings were folded and clipped together. The folded articles were put in one package, wrapped in specially provided squares of cotton cloth. The hanger articles were hung on wire loops inside a cotton dress bag.

Valuables were put into a thick paper envelope

to which was clipped a list of the contents. This list was made by the nurse and signed by the patient. The envelope was sealed. It would be sent to the vault for safe-keeping, and a receipt would be brought to the patient.

Personal articles which the patient wished to retain at the bedside were put in the drawer of the bedside table. The drawer was small. The accumulation of too many personal effects could not be permitted at the bedside.

"You may take care of your patient's clothes," the 'head nurse' said.

Miss Laredo raided Miss Stone's blue uniform pocket quite boldly, her face sober, her eyes impersonal. There was a titter of amusement from the class when she produced an unopened letter, but her own face showed no change whatever. Sabra noticed that Miss Wilbur's face was likewise unreadable until she saw a faint smile cross it as Miss Laredo handed the letter to her patient with, "You will want to read your mail when you've rested a little." The nurse gave no recognition whatever to the amused approval of the class. She went on making her list.

When she brought out the dress bag and the cover for the folded things, Miss Stone raised on her elbow and said in a slightly whining tone, "You be careful of that apron, Nurse. I just pressed it this morning."

"I'll be very careful," Miss Laredo said so sol-

emly that no one could remain still, and they all laughed most unprofessionally.

Eventually the patient was asked for a criticism of the entire procedure. When that was finished Miss Wilbur brought the demonstration to a close with a final question: "Is there anything further?" her tone implying that there could not be.

Miss Stone sat up most correctly in her high-necked nightgale. "Yes, Miss Wilbur," she said. "There's one thing. The next time I have a letter to mail I'll see that I mail it before I come on duty."

Miss Wilbur nodded. Yes. A uniform pocket was no place for letters, either outgoing or incoming. Letters were personal. They had nothing to do with the duty hours of nurses in the training school.

Personal! thought Sabra Dunning with a sudden surge of concern, at least the tenth she had experienced that day, she was sure. *Personal!* I wonder if there's anything on that bulletin board now. With difficulty she brought her attention back to what Miss Wilbur was saying.

While Miss Stone was dressing in the adjoining room, to which she had been conducted, rather absurdly wrapped in a blanket in lieu of dressing gown, the rest of the class rehearsed the do's and don'ts of linen closets. They were considerably reassured when Miss Wilbur told them that every linen closet into which they would be sent this afternoon would already have at least one of each article on its shelves. It required several days, she

said, to become familiar with the arrangement of linen. She urged them to take the utmost care with their folding and their stacking. "Carefulness, neatness, speed," she said.

At three forty-five they were dismissed. Each of them had been assigned to a ward linen closet. She made sure that they knew where the ward was in each case, the name of the head nurse on duty, and how they were to present themselves for the work they were to do. Unless they were assigned to further duty by the head nurse after the linen was put away, she would tell them to go off duty. They must leave the hospital at once. No loitering on the hospital premises was permitted at any time. Miss Wilbur warned them that there was not time to go across the street and back before they were due on their wards. They might go to the rest room they had used this morning if they wished, and with one exception they did.

Sabra Dunning went to the elevator, rode to Macey Fourth, and hurried down the ramp and corridor to the bulletin board once more. There was nothing there.

By the time she arrived at the rest room most of the probationers had left. She bathed her face quickly, washed her hands, giving her hair a sort of frantic look as she dried them. "It's all right." Bianca Laredo's eyes met hers in the mirror. "What are you all keyed up about?"

"No-othing," Sabra fibbed. (I will learn not to let personal things come up while I'm on duty!)

"Well, come on, then." Bianca linked an arm in hers and let go at once, remembering. "You go to Men's Medical, don't you? I'm in First South. We can ride together that far."

Ahead of Sabra as she approached her ward loped a Filipino in white. He was pushing a clumsy low-wheeled dummy on which rode two mountain-high baskets of laundry.

"My goodness! Will I ever get all of that put away?" Sabra sighed, wishing that he had stayed in front of her all the way down that long ward instead of shunting off through a door at the left the instant they entered it. That must be where the linen closet was.

The distance to the ward desk was at least ten miles. Every bed was occupied. Sabra walked down the broad aisle made by opposing bed ends, trying to move silently, trying to move swiftly, trying to look at ease, trying to seem alert, her hands at her sides, her head up, her eyes looking straight toward Miss Gilbert, the short, dark, sharp-looking head nurse who was standing behind the desk, apparently watching every single one of the probationer's muscles as they propelled her nearer and nearer.

Sabra could hear the balls of her feet slap the linoleum, and her effort to stop that put a queer jerk into her knee action. She wondered if it showed through her uniform. Another three miles and she would be there. She tried sliding her feet, but they hissed. She forgot her feet and thought only of her hair, for she was certain that Miss Gil-

bert's eyes were now focused directly upon it. Was it standing on end again?

She was five feet from the point where she knew she must speak. Miss Gilbert's eyes had not lowered. Sabra drew a short breath, and with a wholly involuntary movement her left hand took a quick dab at her hair, front to back, and dropped to her side again, fairly tingling with the touch of unruly wavy curls.

She looked straight into Miss Gilbert's eyes, which somehow, short though the head nurse was, seemed to be exactly level with her own. "Miss Gilbert," she said with a slight bow that she was quite unable to prevent, though she knew it was not done, "Miss Dunning, reporting from Miss Wilbur's class to put away the linen."

"Oh yes, Miss Dunning. The linen has just arrived. We are glad to have help with it. You will wash your hands before beginning."

"Yes, Miss Gilbert." Sabra's eyes sought a place to wash them, and Miss Gilbert's crisp voice told her.

"The left door. The paper towel goes in the metal hamper beneath. Blot. Don't rub."

"Thank you, Miss Gilbert." Sabra went into the utility room. She had learned already the un wisdom of rubbing with the kind of paper towel the hospital supplied. They left fuzz on your hands if you rubbed. It was odd that Miss Wilbur had not mentioned the need to wash their hands just before taking care of the linen. Sabra was halfway

to the linen closet before she realized that this special bit of instruction had been due to that pat at her hair on the way down the ward.

"Will I ever learn to be as observing as that?" she asked herself, thinking about it again sometime later as the neatly folded stacks of linen rose between the shelves.

Three times before she finished a nurse came in to get a towel or a pillowcase or a hot-water-bottle cover. The first two merely nodded to acknowledge her presence, but the third one remained a moment, looking the place over critically. Finally she said, "Miss Gilbert has gone off duty, Miss Dunning." Sabra stopped and turned to stand at attention. "I am in charge now. I am Miss Murdoch. When you have finished you will report to me."

"Yes, Miss Murdoch."

The new head nurse went out. "It is better to leave this door open slightly," she said over her shoulder. "It can get pretty close in there." Sabra was relieved. Her face had been feeling dry and flushed for some time.

The last article was in place, finally, and Sabra stood back to examine her work. Two or three of the stacks had a slight lean. She straightened them. What do I do with these baskets? They certainly could not be left here. She was glad that they gave her something to ask Miss Murdoch about. It was easier to approach a head nurse, Sabra thought, if you had something you could say.

She went straight to the desk, thinking only of her question this time, and stood silently while Miss Murdoch gave instructions to two junior nurses. They were still busy at the chart file on the desk when the telephone buzzed. Miss Murdoch answered it.

"Men's Medical, Miss Murdoch speaking. Yes, Miss MacLaren. Yes, I believe so, Miss MacLaren. Yes, Miss MacLaren." She put the instrument back in its cradle, her face inscrutable, and looked at Sabra.

"You have finished with the linen, Miss Dunning?"

"Yes, Miss Murdoch. Will you tell me, please, where the baskets are to be put?"

"There is a stock room two doors to the left of the ward entry. Put them on the dummy there. And then you will report at once to Miss MacLaren."

"Yes, Miss Murdoch." Sabra felt suddenly cold throughout her body, save for two burning spots on either cheek. Miss Murdoch walked beside her part way down that endless ward, then passed her, and swung open the linen-closet door. She gave the closet a quick but thorough scrutiny and closed the door again.

"Very nice," she said impersonally, passing Sabra again, and went back to her desk.

With a huge wicker basket in each hand Sabra left the ward, her arms held shoulder level before

her so the baskets would not scrape on the floor. In a sort of trance she found the stock room and put the baskets on the dummy. On her way to the elevator her shoes on the linoleum floor of this lower corridor whispered a wordless tune, *Here it is; here it is; here it is.*

Miss Wilbur was just leaving the office as Sabra was admitted. Miss Wilbur's glance was so full of comprehension that it alarmed her. There were two nurses in white talking with Miss MacLaren. After one quick glance at the superintendent of nurses Sabra kept her eyes carefully on the wall behind Miss MacLaren's head while she waited.

Miss MacLaren finished her conversation with the two nurses, and they went out. Then she was busy a moment at the file. She turned finally, consulted a memorandum pad on her desk, and looked up at Sabra. "Good afternoon, Miss Dunning. Miss Wilbur has just reported to me that the members of your class have only this afternoon received the list of rules by which nurses in training must govern their private affairs. You have your copy?"

"Yes, Miss MacLaren."

"You have read it, Miss Dunning?"

"Yes, Miss MacLaren."

"Very well. I may say that when I asked that you report to me I had assumed that these rules had been given you Saturday. It seems those copies had not yet been finished by the typist." Her keen eyes were searching Sabra's face. "That also ex-

plains why you were sent a copy of the rules at your room yesterday. It appeared that you had not read them."

"I understand, Miss MacLaren." Sabra controlled her relief with difficulty.

"In the interests of the hospital and of the training school, Miss Dunning, it is sometimes necessary for me to ask and to receive answers to rather direct questions of a personal nature. I must ask one now. Were you the guest of Doctor Galen Trent, of our interne staff, yesterday at dinner?"

"Yes, Miss MacLaren, and for an automobile drive before dinner." How did Miss MacLaren know she had had dinner with Galen?

"You have known Doctor Trent before entering the training school?" Miss MacLaren asked, her voice still grave.

"Yes, Miss MacLaren." Sabra drew a breath and exhaled without saying anything further, that word "personal" having shot upright in her attention once more.

"You have known him long, Miss Dunning?"

"Yes, Miss MacLaren." Sabra controlled a smile.

"You understand the full intent of Rule 11, Miss Dunning?"

"Ye-es, Miss MacLaren." A flicker of trouble came into Sabra's eyes. Too well she understood the intent and the undoubted effect of Rule 11. Miss MacLaren looked away a moment. Then:

"What are you going to do about it, Miss Dun-

ning?" Miss MacLaren's eyes were interested now in an impersonal way.

As if, Sabra thought, as if she cared only about the solution of a difficulty in hospital management. Well, the probationer realized slowly, that's all she should be interested in. Unconsciously Sabra's chin went up a trifle, but the smile above that determined line was not entirely spontaneous. A faint sound escaped her. It might have been a sigh, or it might have been an indrawn breath of purposefulness. And then she said quietly, "I expect to find that my self-discipline needs brushing up, Miss MacLaren. But you can count on its not failing."

So far as Sabra could see, there was not a trace of change in Miss MacLaren's face or manner. The superintendent rose and spoke four words, four quiet dismissing words. Words without any particular inflection to give them the slightest freight of approval.

For Miss MacLaren said only, "Very well, Miss Dunning."

Sabra bowed slightly, felt like a puppet on strings as she turned, and went through the open doorway, down the short passage into Macey First corridor, which was just as shiny, just as impersonal, and just as empty as it had been when she had entered the training-school office fifteen minutes before.

Miss Wilbur was standing at the Macey desk, apparently waiting for her. The instructor came

forward a few steps to meet her. "You will report to Men's Medical again, Miss Dunning, until Miss Murdoch sends you off duty." It was said quietly, in a friendly tone, but without a hint of a smile.

A hint of a smile would have helped, Sabra thought, going back to the ward, and she shook her head hopelessly. Would she ever learn that a student nurse should not expect smiles so she would feel more at ease? Would she ever learn to leave her *self* at home—or somewhere—when she came on duty? Would she ever, ever learn?

"Of course I will!" Sabra snapped herself up bluntly. "Of course I will. I've learned it *now*."

Miss Murdoch did not seem surprised when she returned. "Bed 3 has just been vacated," she said. "There is a new patient coming in this evening. Our bed numbers begin at this end, the odd numbers to the right of the desk, the even numbers to the left." She glanced at her watch. "There is time for you to get the bed changed before you go off duty. Be sure there is nothing in the bedside-table drawer."

"Yes, Miss Murdoch. Does the patient arrive soon? Are the hot-water bottles to be put in the bed now?"

"No. Someone else will take care of that."

Goody! thought Sabra, going down to the linen closet. I'm going to do something that's real now, something that's connected with a real patient, I mean. She took the utmost care in making that first ward bed and was more than glad that she had

practiced so many times in the demonstration room.

"Even the spread looks right," she said to herself when the job was done, and if anybody could do a neater job of mitring sheets she would like to see it. She started back to the desk to report and slowed instinctively. What could Miss Murdoch possibly see that was wrong?

"The open end of the pillowcase should never face the door, Miss Dunning."

"Face the door—my goodness—which——?" Sabra blinked, choked off her whispers, and went back. The door into the ward, of course, not the door of the treatment room or the door into the utility room. The door into the ward was the important door when you were concerned with the appearance of a bed. "You'd think anyone would know that." She ended the pillow over, making it smooth again.

She went back to the desk, feeling a little less successful this time, but Miss Murdoch reassured her. "That's a nice-looking bed now, and you've done it very quickly. Go into the treatment room and try to familiarize yourself with it. Miss Burke is there. Notice what she is doing. You will go off duty at five-thirty. You will report to me of course, first."

"Yes, Miss Murdoch." Sabra went into the treatment room and found a cap nurse standing rather glumly watching the bubbles in a large flask from which she was distilling water.

"I am Miss Dunning, Miss Burke," she said.

"Oh. Hello. You should have said, 'Miss Burke, I am Miss Dunning,' but it's all right with me. How do you like everything?"

"I think it's wonderful!" Sabra replied enthusiastically but quietly, though she was much puzzled by the informality of this Miss Burke. Everyone else seemed so very formal.

"What do you want to ask about?" Miss Burke sighed. "I guess I'm supposed to tell you something important."

Sabra asked the question which had first occurred to her on the day the probationers had made their tour of the hospital, the question which had occurred to her more than once since. It had presented itself again just a few moments ago, while she was making up Bed 3, for in Bed 1 next it lay that patient with the frightened eyes. Miss Burke might be able to tell her what was the matter with that patient. "What disease is it," she asked, "that makes the patient look scared to death?"

"Heart cases sometimes are that way. But we haven't any heart cases here just now. Which one do you mean?"

Sabra told her and saw her expression change abruptly.

"Oh, that's something else again," Miss Burke said cryptically. "That bird's got a right to be scared."

"You mean he won't get well?"

"Maybe he will. But it won't do him much good—or I miss my guess. Not if he stays around town too long."

What did she mean? She sounded boastful. Sabra studied her face, recalling something—she did not know quite what. Miss Burke seemed to get satisfaction out of the poor man's fright. It was very strange that a nurse could get satisfaction out of anything like that, Sabra thought. "I don't believe I know quite what you mean," she said slowly. Where was it she had seen this girl before?

"That's all I can tell you," Miss Burke said. But Sabra knew that she meant, rather, that was all she intended to tell.

"I'd like to read his chart—his history, I mean," Sabra said.

"Wouldn't help you any figuring him out," Miss Burke said, turning the gas flame higher. "I hate distilling water! His whole history isn't there. They always make me level the storage jar." Then, as if she had suddenly remembered her duty in regard to this probationer, she went on, "We always keep a supply on hand. That big bottle there. It holds five gallons. It's not sterile, you understand. Just distilled."

Sabra gave this matter all her attention now. "But doesn't boiling sterilize it?"

"If you boil it long enough, of course it does. But if it comes in contact with anything that's not sterile, what's the use? The mouth of that bottle isn't sterile. It's what we call *clean*." There was a

pad of cotton used as a cork, Sabra saw, with a cap of gauze tied over it. "We keep our sterile water in that smaller flask." Miss Burke pointed to another shelf. "It's used in small quantities only. That plug is sterile cotton, and it's all covered more carefully. It has to be opened carefully too. I guess you haven't done that yet. I can't teach you now."

"No," Sabra said, noticing that the boiling water in the flask was getting low, though Miss Burke seemed to be quite unconcerned about it. She was not even watching it now. The drip-drip-drip from the rubber tubing into the receiving flask was much faster than it had been at first.

Miss Burke went to the shelf and lifted down the storage bottle, standing with her back to the gas plate as she took off the covering. "I'd hate to be in that Bed 1's shoes," she said significantly.

"Is that gas all right?" Sabra reached to turn it off but was stopped by a ringing *sping!* With a tinkling clatter the boiled-dry Florence flask had burst and scattered its hundreds of fragments over the floor, the table, and the gas plate itself.

"Better the luck!" Miss Burke exclaimed.

"What happened?" Miss Murdoch was there instantly.

"It's another of those faulty Florence flasks, Miss Murdoch," Miss Burke said, her voice slightly complaining. "Good thing I didn't lose all my distilled water."

"Oh, dear! Just at tray time too!" Miss Mur-

doch's voice was controlled, but her annoyance was clear enough. "That's the third flask this month, Miss Burke."

Sabra listened, somewhat aghast, at Miss Burke's statement. Any flask would have burst under those circumstances. But the damage was done, and it was not for a probationer to comment on the fact that a cap nurse had allowed it to boil dry. Sabra went for a brush and dustpan, remembering what a task it had been to collect all of the broken thermometer in the classroom the other day. But Miss Murdoch shook her head when Sabra started to clean up the fragments.

"No," she said. "Miss Burke will take care of it. It is time for you to go off duty." She went back to the desk, with Sabra behind her. "I didn't send you out there to learn how to break flasks," she said a little ruefully. "Thank you for helping us with the linen and that bed. I hope you are assigned to duty here."

"Oh, so do I, Miss Murdoch!" Sabra almost gobbled that bit of what she thought was friendliness, not recognizing it for what it really was—a conventional word to a probationer at the end of her first ward task.

"You may go off now," Miss Murdoch said, and there was nothing but a cool, impersonal statement in either her voice or her eyes this time. It was an effective reproof.

How long does it take, for pity's sake? Sabra Dunning asked herself angrily as she went down

the corridor. How everlastingly long does it take to learn you're a nurse and not the head nurse's best friend? She would have given anything to have said only, "I hope so, Miss Murdoch." To have said it simply and quietly. And instead I beamed at her like a kid being offered a candy stick, and she didn't like it a bit, either, thank goodness. Miss Murdoch is going to help me learn, if I'm ever sent back there.

Bianca Laredo was going out Macey Exit when Sabra reached it. "Where've you been?" Bianca demanded. "You look as grim as a traffic cop at a busy intersection."

"Been on an inspection tour—department of the interior. Traffic cop, huh? That's the fondest thing I've got to be of, as Amos 'n' Andy would say. *And I ain't*. Where've you been yourself?"

"Oh, golly," Bianca said, shaking her head from side to side. "I piled those pesky towels eight times, and they still leaned over! Did yours behave?"

"What?" Sabra asked. "Towels? What towels?"

"Why, didn't you get a linen closet? I thought we all did."

"Oh! Of course I did. But that was so long ago I'd forgotten all about it. Goodness, I had a ward bed to make, and I was in a treatment room for a while, and—and——" Sabra stopped. What else had she done? Oh! The visit to Miss MacLaren's office was hardly anything to report. "And I learned something about one of the patients in the ward too," she finished vaguely.

"You're just lucky; that's all," Bianca said. "I never was any good even at building with blocks, or anything like that. If I have to become expert at linen closets before they decide to keep me I'll bet I never get a cap."

"Don't be silly." Sabra suspected that she was half serious. "It isn't so easy the first time. We'll learn; you'll see. Aren't you crazy about it all?"

"Not about linen, I'm not. I never saw so many sheets and towels and things in all my life. I got so muddled up I didn't know whether my right hand was on my left arm or not when I tried to fold rapidly. And I guess my head nurse didn't know either, from the way she looked at me. She told me finally that I'd better let it go—the linen, I mean. She said it would be easier next time. I'm beginning to wonder if there's anything I can do that'll ever be any use in a hospital."

"You big goof!" Sabra got hold of her arm and forced her to skip down the steps. "You're hungry; that's what's the matter with you. Come on, let's get a wash and hurry back here for supper. Isn't it lucky we both got first serving?"

CHAPTER XII

SABRA had been in bed an hour and a half that night when she sat up suddenly. "I know where I saw her! In that tea room!"

"Oh, dear!" came drowsily from Miss Webber's bed. "Have we got a prob that talks in her sleep?"

"No, of course you haven't!" Sabra whispered. "I just thought of something I've been trying to recall all day, nearly."

"You'd better get to sleep."

"Maybe I can now," Sabra said to herself, settling back under the covers. But she could not sleep. Now that she had recalled where it was that she had seen Miss Burke before, she found it impossible not to recall a great deal of what Miss Burke had been saying that day at the tea room when both Bianca and herself had been practically obliged to overhear. Miss Burke had said that if the boys knew as much about that man as she did they wouldn't be so puzzled about him. The boys must be the internes and doctors. Miss Burke

had been connected with a district court, too; she had been a court stenographer, Sabra recalled, as statement after statement came back to her.

What an awful thing to do! Sabra thought as she comprehended all that conversation had meant when she coupled it with the right "man." There was no doubt in her mind now that the man in question was the patient in Bed 1 in Men's Medical. You just have to put two and two together, Sabra thought, arguing with herself silently. You just have to in a situation like this. She knew that district courts try criminal cases. If Miss Burke had seen the Bed 1 man in a criminal court, and if he was afraid of her now, there must be only one kind of reason. Either he had broken parole or had escaped from prison.

The patient in Bed 1 was a terrified man, if she had ever seen one, Sabra was certain. He was more like a terrified child. He was seriously ill, and he had been there for weeks and weeks. Miss Burke implied that he was more scared than sick, and she practically said she knew why.

Oh, I've been reading too many mystery stories! Sabra flopped over restlessly, knowing that she had not read a single mystery story in weeks. It was absurd to be drawing conclusions like that. But Miss Burke had said she had been a court reporter. That meant she would have been present at trials.

Now you know perfectly well, Sabra Dunning, that not even coincidence has an arm as long as

that. (But maybe the arm of the law is that long, a persistent demon suggested in the back of her mind.) By what odd chance would any escaped criminal happen to turn up in the same hospital with a court reporter who had changed to nursing? But Sabra was sure that was just what had happened, however wild it sounded. "You often read of things like that in the newspapers." Escaped criminals were not always recaptured where they were supposed to be. Another flop and another jab at the pillow.

"What's worrying you, Prob?" Miss Borland's low voice came across the space between their two beds. "If you're restless why don't you light a fire and read a little while? There's still a lot of driftwood. Shall I light it?"

Sabra looked over at her. "I—I don't know. I'm sorry I'm being a nuisance. Something is worrying me, but I shouldn't talk about it, I think."

"Of course not. One of the things you have to learn pretty early here is to turn off worries. We all have them, but they steal sleep, and that shows in your work. A patient can see you're not up to the mark a great deal faster than your head nurse can, somehow."

"Why, that wouldn't be fair," Sabra said, hoisting herself on her elbow.

"No, it wouldn't be fair." Miss Borland tied the belt of her dressing gown and handed Sabra some matches. "Light yourself a few colored flames, now, and dream the worries away. I'm going to get

a shower, and I'll expect to find you all snoozy when I come back."

But even with the fire, and even though she exerted considerable will power, it took some time for Sabra to clear her mind of subjects which would reveal to her patients tomorrow that she was "not up to the mark." For once she did succeed in shutting off the patient in Bed 1, there was that senior interne, Dr. Galen Trent, to think about and the fact that not for weeks probably could he and she have any time together, to say nothing of the ranch and Mr. Mason and Della's letter.

Miss Borland certainly knew how to strike the nail on the head, Sabra thought, trying to fight down this latter subject. She was grateful for Miss Borland's straight talk, and after a while of thinking about that she grew quieter. "We should have vacuum cleaners for our thinkers," she whispered when Miss Borland came back. "I've got mine emptied now, though." Sabra imagined you would learn a good deal about the demands of this work by the time you were a senior.

"I found stopping worries one of my hardest jobs," Miss Borland said. "You've got to turn off your mind completely when it's time to sleep. And *you* have to learn to turn off your whisperer, too, Sabra Dunning. Good night."

She was gone in a few moments more, and there was only the faint crackling of the bits of driftwood beneath the low varicolored flames. The other girls who were "home" were all sleeping. Sabra gave

her pillow a final smoothing, wadded it into a ball under her cheek, and went to sleep herself.

* * *

Six o'clock came with its varied sounds of alarm clocks. The house awoke. Doors slammed; the slosh of slippered feet sounded in the hall. Now and then there was the click of high heels. The big first-floor room was damp with fog. Sabra pressed her fingers against her temples and sat up, swinging her feet over the side of the bed. It was impossible that six o'clock was here already.

The telephone rang in the hall, and she started out to answer it, but in the doorway turned and came back. Someone else had got there first. A cross voice shouted into the room: "Lacey! Lacey! Phone!"

Miss Lacey moved slightly, mumbling.

"You're wanted on the telephone, Miss Lacey," Sabra said.

"Good cats! What for?" Lacey got up and went out. Her voice drifted back to the room. "Miss Lacey speaking. Yes. Yes, Miss Murray." She hung up.

"Well, of all the nerve!" she exclaimed as she entered the room again. "Markey! I've got to go on seven to three! Can you tie that? Worked from three to eleven, and I go on again at seven! They make me sick." She looked across at Sabra, the annoyance in her face giving way to scrutiny. "What've you been doing, Prob? You look like the dickens. Are you ill?"

"No, of course not," Sabra said. "Just sleepy."

"You'd better pinch some color into your face before you cross the street, or they'll ship you to the infirmary. You have to make up every day you spend there too."

Sabra shook her head. No, they wouldn't. Cold water would fix her face, she was sure, even if she had not slept very much. For after that first half hour of sleep she had wakened off and on all night. It was somehow harder to sleep when you argued with yourself than if you'd been arguing with another person. You could at least walk away from anybody else, she told herself with a wry smile.

When she came back from down the hall the juniors were dressing rapidly and talking just as rapidly. "Makes me mad!" Miss Lacey was saying. "I had a date too. Told me I was set on three to eleven for a month, and now it's seven to three instead. I suppose somebody else wanted a date."

"Oh, Lacey, don't be silly! You know things pile up sometimes." Miss Markey was trying to quiet her.

"Maybe they do," Lacey said, not to be diverted so easily. "But you'd be cranky too. Always it's me they crack schedules on."

"Because you fit in easier than some of the rest of us. You're more adaptable."

"Bushwah! I couldn't swallow that one, Markey."

"Just the same, I heard Miss Murray say you can keep your head no matter where they put you."

Now stop grouching and jump into your uni and get over there and help 'em out. Can I phone your date for you or send a telegram or something? It's my short day. I'm off at ten-thirty."

"You quit telling me tall tales," Miss Lacey said in a funny tone. "But will you phone for me? It was a lunch date, and I know I won't get a minute; there's such a lot of red tape about telephoning while you're on duty." She got a dime and scribbled something rapidly on a bit of paper, putting both on Miss Markey's bed. "Sometimes you have to wait to get him," she said. "Thank you ever so much, Markey."

So even a junior nurse has to put aside personal affairs for professional demands, hmmm? After all, Sabra was thinking, you could hardly expect pleasure to come first in a place like this. "Are schedules often changed on such short notice?" she asked, addressing no one in particular.

Yes, it seemed they were. But never without reason.

"You learn to take your fun when you get it," Miss Streeter said, "and not howl when you don't get it. I mean not to howl on duty. If we didn't complain over here once in a while we'd blow up, wouldn't we, Lacey?"

"It was Lacey's turn," Enid Markey said, grinning. "I had mine last week. That was something you missed, Prob."

They all went across the street together, converging toward Macey Entrance with the clusters

of nurses from houses below them on the street. Bianca Laredo came skipping down the hill a moment after and ran on ahead of them up the steps, to stand puffing and holding the door open for them. "I couldn't stop!" she laughed.

Somehow, Sabra thought, Miss Laredo's vivacity seemed to lift the spirits of all of them.

* * *

Every probationer in the class sensed the increased tempo in Miss Wilbur's instruction that morning. They were beginning to feel familiar with the hospital routine, she told them, ignoring their slight inclination to disagree with her. Very soon now they would begin their studies in theory, in connection with which they would have several textbooks—and several additional instructors and "not so much of me." She passed over the concerned gasp of surprise and regret with a brief smile. "My subject is nursing practice. Your course includes many other subjects. Anatomy and physiology, materia medica and therapeutics, hygiene, psychology, medicines and their administration, solutions, bandaging, dietetics, and several others. This morning we will spend some time on the vocabulary of the hospital. You will need to take notes." The instructor paused, looking the class over. "Is each of you ready to give me your undivided attention?" Her eyes were fixed on something in the back of the room—something well over their heads.

Sabra Dunning moved guiltily in her chair and sat a little straighter.

"You see," Miss Wilbur went on now, "there are so many things to be learned that we cannot afford to lose a single minute of class time thinking about things elsewhere in the hospital." (She's kinder than I deserve, Sabra thought.) "I know that questions will accumulate in your minds. We shall try to get them all answered eventually. You might put them in your notebooks and bring them to me during my office hours. The schedule is on my office door—Macey First. Now, back to the work in hand."

Hospitals, she said, had a sort of language of their own. "I don't mean we have a special lingo, but words do take on special meanings. I'll illustrate. There are occasions when a nurse's hands and forearms must be clean beyond any possibility of carrying contamination to a patient. For such occasions she does not wash her hands and arms; she *scrubs*. She scrubs with a disinfected brush, using warm water and green soap—that is, liquid soap—and she scrubs not until she thinks her hands and arms are clean, but for a certain stated number of minutes. So when we say 'scrub' we mean all of that, the whole procedure. You will be taught how to do it, shortly, and will practice it until you can *scrub* effectively."

Repetition, they thought, all of them, the endless and persistent repetition of every task they had to learn. Repetition until they were sure they had it

letter perfect, repetition until their hands could move correctly without their having to think about each separate movement. And then when it came time for them to demonstrate Miss Wilbur would find weakness after weakness, or even error after error. She would be firm and kind about it, but the practice must begin again, and they would have to demonstrate again, until she was satisfied that they knew the why and the way of that particular task.

She told them she was supposed to be the most difficult person to satisfy in the whole hospital staff. "My reputation depends upon it." They were not sure whether she was joking or not, but down to the last probationer they strove to satisfy her completely. There was something very stimulating about Miss Wilbur's quiet "That was well done."

They worked at top speed for the ensuing hour, taking down from Miss Wilbur's dictation the meanings of words, phrases, and abbreviations which were in common use about the hospital. "There is only one thing to do about these, now," she said in finishing. "That is to learn them. Learn them by heart. You must not only know how to say them correctly; you must know how to write them correctly, and you must know instantly what they mean when you see them written by someone else. You must know them so thoroughly that you cannot be confused about them. Do you think you can do that?"

"We can if you ask us to, Miss Wilbur!" The

students in the front of the room turned to see who had spoken.

"Speak for yourself, John!" Madge Lennox remarked in a blunt undertone.

Miss Wilbur's face had turned formal abruptly. "I cannot imagine a place that would be more uncomfortable than a pedestal," she said after a moment. "If any one of you wants to pay me a compliment—and someone does seem to want to—there is no more graceful one in the whole encyclopedia of compliments than careful and exact performance of the duties in which it is my responsibility to drill you. Now I hope *that* dragon is laid, for all time."

"Goodness—are there others?" Bianca Laredo asked.

"Yes, there is one more dragon that I know of," Miss Wilbur answered. "A very woolly dragon. He always starts out all right with his head—but he invariably gets tangled up in his tail. In other words, he can never lose sight of himself."

Madge Lennox spoke up, courteously, friendlily, looking at her classmates as if she were an older sister. "Remember the day I told you it was going to take something more than uniforms to make nurses of us? That's what I was thinking about then. We were all so pleased with ourselves down in that sewing room."

"But you've never had any woolly dragons!" Sabra said to her. "And I'd like to know how you managed it too." Miss Lennox was doing very

good work, as all of them knew, and everyone liked her.

"Well, I had to bring up three naughty young brothers and get through high school and manage the house for my dad—that doesn't leave you much time for dragons. Excuse me, Miss Wilbur!"

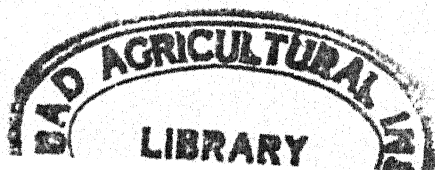
"I wouldn't think of excusing you. You have given us the clue we need. Do you see, the rest of you, that being interested in other people is the way to avoid making a woolly dragon of yourself?"

"Yes." Bianca Laredo sighed. "And I wish I could do it. But even yet I can tell that the back of my apron is crumpled just by the way Miss Alston looks at the front of me!" Miss Alston was the instructor in materia medica, and Miss Laredo's admission got a sympathetic murmur from all of them.

"Now, where were we?" Miss Wilbur ended this digression as well as the understanding smile which had started across her own face.

"Being self-conscious!" Sabra Dunning said with a mischievous wink. She knew her own dragon was probably woolliest of all.

As she went across the street one day several weeks later Sabra recalled that few moments of complete distraction that Miss Wilbur had allowed them while she talked about dragons, and she was able to see now Miss Wilbur's twofold purpose in permitting the interruption in their class work. Miss Wilbur seemed to know the exact moment when they had reached the limit of their



capacity to take things in. She had chosen such an instant to bring up that discussion of the personal. Sabra wished that she herself could be so adroit.

For a long time now the probationers had been on duty in various parts of the hospital. They were at last becoming familiar with the detailed layout of the vast hospital plant and could find their way quickly and directly to almost any part of it.

So far their duties had been confined to making beds, giving baths, setting up trays for meals, carrying them to the patients and taking them away again, serving nourishments in the late afternoon—orange juice, eggnogs, and the like—taking care of the inevitable needs of persons confined to bed. They charted everything they did in their neatest print. They were gradually learning not to see or think of the inherent unpleasantness connected with some of these tasks, for they had observed quite early that their own distaste for any task communicated itself immediately to the patient and made the patient uncomfortable.

Sabra had spent most of her duty time in Men's Medical. That seemed to her to be by far the busiest and the most crowded ward she had seen. There was rarely a minute in the day when there was not a light on over one bed or another, and often several were on at once. The staff there was small—too small, everyone admitted. There never were nurses enough in any hospital, Miss Wilbur said, to get things done as the nurses would like to have them done.

Sabra had lately been able to take care of the three baths, which were her assignment, with considerable dispatch. She could take the T.P.R. of the entire ward in just the time Miss Gilbert allotted for it. She could clean the utility room or the treatment room quite efficiently, she thought, more than once wondering what Della at home would think of her housekeeping skill. In short, she could do many things about the ward now, and do them well.

Furthermore, in connection with things personal, so far as her hospital work was concerned, she felt that she had succeeded in putting the ranch where it belonged. She had managed a hurried visit to Mr. Stanley's office one afternoon when she had worked "broken" and had laid before him a long list of things which had come up through telephone calls or letters from Della. Every one of them seemed important to Sabra, but sometime before she had finished rehearsing them to the attorney she began to suspect the twinkle in his eyes.

"You know, Sabra," he said at last, "I don't believe I've ever come across a young woman before who could discuss farming matters so intelligently. But you must remember, child, that you've put Mason in charge. Let him do the worrying. I'll wager he has taken care of each of these things the day they arose. I've had several talks with him. He's not the kind that neglects things. Della is doubtless a little over-careful," he added.

"She feels a responsibility, you see, that she is not quite trained to assume. But you do understand about each of these points, and you must try to understand why she reports them to you. She thinks it is her duty. She'd have a fit if she knew she was worrying you with them."

Sabra wondered how many of the things the probationers reported to Miss Wilbur had the same effect. "Why, I'm not exactly worried, Mr. Stanley!"

"Oh. Well, then, that's fine. About that plow and the hidden rocks. You know, that fellow got himself a contour map and a geologic-survey plat as a result of that mishap. Said it gave him something to think about. Something about water pans and draining, he said. It was over my head a bit, I must admit, but it seems to be right up his alley. He said it would change his planting plans a little, because he intends to take advantage of what he called a concealed water shed.

"The only thing you need worry about in connection with that chap, so far as I can see, is whether we can *keep* him or not. So I think you'd better pull out those gray hairs you've been getting and forget the ranch for a while except as a place to have a good time in on your off-duty time. Let Mason and me do the worrying. We're smarter at it than you are."

He gave Sabra such a feeling of relief that she was tempted to talk with him about the patient in Bed 1. But that was a hospital affair, and she de-

cided for the time being she had better not. At any rate, the way in which Mr. Stanley put aside the ranch worries would leave her more attention to give that matter, and it certainly needed more attention.

The only thing which she had attempted in which she felt she had made no progress whatever was in her effort to reassure the man in Bed 1 and cheer him up a little. He was afraid, and he remained afraid. This fact became tied in her mind with a sharp corkscrew of a thought which kept turning and turning in spite of all she could do to control it. *You should do something about what Miss Burke knows about Bed 1.* For she thought of that in the daytime and in the night—the middle of the night more often than not. It was taking serious toll of her sleep lately. Twice Miss Gilbert had asked her if she felt ill, and Sabra had insisted that it was only that she looked a little pale after long-session classes, maybe, between her morning and afternoon duty on the ward.

Today was her short day. She had to be on duty only until ten-thirty. She hoped that today she could get this Burke-Bed 1 matter put in its place. But the fact was that Sabra was unable to consider impartially the affair of Miss Burke's hints and their relation to Bed 1. She knew she was making a personal matter of it. She knew there was a right and a wrong in it. In her personal mind she was sure she knew where the wrong was. But in her professional mind she was not sure. A

dozen times this week she had rehearsed in her thoughts the last conversation she had had with Miss Burke about him—it was a stolen conversation, held against all the rules of good practice, in the treatment room. You had to take Miss Burke when you could get her, Sabra thought, rehearsing that talk, that *baited* talk, which she herself had begun.

"I wish he didn't look so frightened," Sabra had said. "It must be awful to be sick and be frightened too." Only a moment before she had seen him raise his head and peer about the ward, everything about him suggesting a dog that feared he would be struck if he dared to show himself. His bony face was like a starved dog's somehow, she thought.

"He's not afraid because he's sick," Miss Burke replied. "If that's what's worrying you."

"Of what then? Can't we do something about it?"

"If we're smart we won't. I'm not getting dragged into anything."

"I don't understand you, Miss Burke."

"Little probs shouldn't ask so many questions!" Miss Burke gave her an arch look, and Sabra could not go on. Was Miss Burke really as silly as she sounded?

And then, whenever Sabra had tried to make an occasion to bring it up in class, in an abstract form, she would find herself uncertain as to how to put it, and she would let it go another day. Nor could she bring herself to see Miss Wilbur about it during office hours, for somehow it seemed like

tattling. Meanwhile, the man in Bed 1 grew worse and worse.

"I wish I could see Galen," she said to herself, "long enough to talk to, and where I could talk to him. I bet he could tell me how to handle it." But that was impossible. She did see him now and then about the hospital, but there he must be only Dr. Trent. They had talked unsatisfactorily several times on the telephone, and they had exchanged letters. But that was all. It had not been easy. But Rule 11 was still Rule 11. And anyway, she could not *write* about Bed 1.

Once she had been sent to the infirmary. That was only this week. She thought back over that day on her way up the hill. She had made the mistake of reporting on duty with a headache so severe that she could not hide it. Miss Gilbert was impatient with her. This ward was no place for nurses who were below par. Sabra had to report to Miss MacLaren. Miss MacLaren was rather short in her questioning. Sabra was ordered to bed. A doctor of the house staff came to see her. He looked her over thoroughly and said, "Well, it's smart to get yourself shipped in here once in a while." He told the attending nurse he did not need her longer, and she went out.

"But I don't want to be here, Doctor!" Sabra objected. "I want to be on duty."

"Oh. So that's the way of it. Then you'll have to stop worrying, young lady. Now see here, there's nothing the matter with you. You're the picture of

health. But you've been pestering yourself about something so you don't sleep enough. And so you get a headache, and no doubt your head nurse's got another one. What's the matter—the boy friend inattentive?"

Sabra's denial was so quick and so energetic that he laughed. "Well—that tells me there is a boy friend, at any rate. You'd better spend a little more of your off-duty time playing around with him and not so much time boning."

"But I don't bone too much, Doctor. Really I don't."

"All right, you don't. Then how do you get this headache?"

"I don't know——"

"Oh yes, you do, young lady. You do know. I can see that. This is why I'm called a fair diagnostician," he assured her. "Now tell Papa what it's all about."

The rush of tears that brought was so sudden and so unexpected that the doctor got off the chair by the bed and walked across the room until she could blink them out of sight.

"Now, never mind, child," he said, coming back after a bit. "I'm not going to pry. All I want is that you realize that you can't hold up in this work if you do any fretting. Something's bothering you. I'm sure of that. If it's concerned with your work, let me suggest that you take it up with one of your instructors or with the superintendent of nurses. If it's concerned with personal affairs, let me urge

you to get it thrashed out and leave it. You've got all any one young woman can handle just meeting the demands the training school makes upon you. You're not sick. Your headache's due to worry—nerves. You can go on duty again tomorrow unless you develop measles overnight." He stood up, putting his stethoscope into his white coat pocket.

"Do you—Doctor, do you have to tell Miss MacLaren about me?"

"Tell her about you? Oh, report, you mean." He chuckled. "Sure I do."

"Please don't tell her I'm worrying. I have been, you know."

"Why not tell her? Be good for her to know. Worries never did rate the privacy they're often given, I think."

"Oh—but, please."

"Okay. On one condition. You do something about 'em."

"Yes, Doctor. I promise. Now can I get up and go on duty?" Her head had almost stopped aching, she said.

"No, you cannot. Tomorrow's time enough. I'll tell the nurse to bring you something to read. Then you might catch up on sleep. I won't see you again, except for measles. I'll tell Miss MacLaren it's nothing but too much greediness for work and perfection, which, I suspect, is a lot of it, at bottom. See that it doesn't happen again. Oh, here, maybe you can figure this one out. It's got me stumped." He took out of his pocket a curiously printed card and

laid it on the bedside table. "Stick it in the mail slot on my office door if you get it, will you? Good-by."

"A crossword puzzle!" Sabra exclaimed, examining the card, and she was busily trying to solve it when two magazines were brought by the infirmiry nurse. "I'm going to finish this first." She held it up, and the nurse smiled.

"Doctor Lang always knew how to handle probs," she said.

Curious how you could remember every detail of an experience like that. "My word!" Sabra clipped off her daydream abruptly and hurried on up the hill. "You'd think a short day lasted a week!" She was planning to go downtown and do some shopping, telephone to Della, then see a movie or else a matinee. She had not decided which. That would have to wait until she had seen a newspaper. When you had only a few hours once a week for restocking your private mind you'd better use discretion in what you selected, she thought. Two or three blunders in that connection since she had been in training had convinced her that the matter should not be left to accident. An afternoon off could be a complete blank by the next morning at T.P.R. time unless you planted something in it that would grow.

She ran up the house steps and remembered just in time not to burst into the room like a whirlwind and waken Miss Borland, who had not yet finished her three months of night duty.

Sabra was barely dressed for the street when the telephone rang. "House 16," she said into the transmitter quietly. "Miss Dunning, probationer, speaking." In a little while more now she would not have to qualify her name when she answered the telephone.

It was Miss MacLaren's secretary. Miss Dunning would report at once, please, to Miss MacLaren's office.

"May I have five minutes, Miss Ellis?"

"Yes, Miss Dunning."

"Of all the awful luck! I just got out of uniform, and now I've got to get right back into it again." You presented yourself in uniform if Miss MacLaren wanted to see you. Never in street clothes. Sabra used three of her five minutes changing, one of them getting down the street again, and the fifth one trying to compose herself and get her breath before going into the office.

"What! Again?" the telephone-switchboard operator demanded as Sabra passed the desk. That impertinent question—gleaned, Sabra knew quite well, from illicit use of ear phones—struck sudden panic into her. What have I done this time? She searched her last few days. It had been Monday that she was in the infirmary. She had gone back on duty on Tuesday, minus her headache. She had been on duty and at classes yesterday. She had studied last night in the library and gone to bed at ten. She had been on duty this morning until she

was sent off duty. What've I done? I can't think of anything.

The implication in the switchboard operator's tone was fair enough. It was not exactly good for your reputation to be called to the office of the superintendent of nurses too many times during your probationary period. Her studies—could that be it? Had she failed? You couldn't fail. If you did you would not be accepted for the training school. If you failed you'd never get a cap. Sabra's face turned paler and paler as she went down the corridor. She took a deep breath and knocked on Miss MacLaren's door so faintly that she was sure no one could hear it, and she had to knock again, terrified lest the first tap *had* been heard and she would seem impatient.

But, no, Miss Ellis opened the door.

"Miss Dunning reporting," Sabra said mechanically. "Miss MacLaren wished to see me?"

"Yes. Will you come in, Miss Dunning?" Miss Ellis went ahead of her. "Miss Dunning is here, Miss MacLaren."

"Thank you. Miss Ellis, will you take these papers to the business office and wait to have them confirmed?" Miss MacLaren looked up as the secretary went out and gave Sabra a pleasant "Good morning, Miss Dunning." And Sabra felt that every bone in her face was being studied by those keen eyes.

"Miss Dunning, I have been asked to deliver an invitation to you. Mrs. Windham has telephoned.

She would like you to have lunch with her today. And I believe that a car has been put at your disposal in the Elite Garage two blocks down this street. This is the motor key." She handed a brass key across the desk. "I understand that you are to use the car throughout the day. This is your short day, I believe?"

"Ye-es, Miss MacLaren." But Sabra's tone quite clearly said, *What under the sun are you talking about?*

"You would never pick up riders, would you, Miss Dunning? People along the road, I mean. You don't do that, do you, unless you happen to know the—ah—the thumber?"

"Of course not, Miss MacLaren." Sabra had a hard time not to stare at her. Miss MacLaren looked perfectly rational, but she couldn't be.

"I thought so." Miss MacLaren stood up, her face struggling with something Sabra was not sure of—was it laughter? "Oh, I was to give you this too." The superintendent took an envelope from her desk. "This will authorize the garage attendant to deliver the car to you." She came around the desk and held the door open. "Run along, Miss Dunning—and have a good time."

"Thank—thank you, Miss MacLaren." Still in a daze Sabra went out into the corridor. "*Windham*," she said aloud. "Who's Mrs. Windham? Where's she live? I never heard of anybody named Windham. What's the matter with—— O-oh! It's Della! Della! But whose car can it be? Who's

driven my car in here? And why this funny way of telling me about it if anybody has? It must be Mr. Mason," she concluded. She swished out of Macey with a speed that left the switchboard operator gasping. She tore open the envelope on the way down the steps.

"Doctor Galen Trent's car! Why, of all things! I wonder if Miss MacLaren knew that. She must have." Sabra began to run, and she burst into the big room again, still chattering to herself. "The old peach!"

"Who's an old peach?" Miss Borland sat up to demand.

"Oh, I'm so sorry! You are, and Miss MacLaren is, and—why, just everybody is!"

"Tha's nice," said Miss Borland drowsily, sinking back. "You shush now, an' le'me sleep."

Sabra almost ran down the hill to the Elite Garage, but by that time she had remembered that she was "in the hospital area," so she was dignified instead. The attendant evidently expected her. Should he bring the car down the ramp? He stopped the car before her with a little flourish, Sabra thought, and he jumped out as if he, too, were feeling very gay this morning. Yes, he had checked the oil, and the gasoline tank was full, and the tire pressure was okay.

Sabra slid under the wheel, tapped the horn, and rolled out into the street, turning downhill perforce, because it was a one-way street. She checked over routes in her mind. Well, it didn't

matter if she did not find the shortest one. There was a traffic stop at the first corner, and she was so busy watching for a chance to go that she actually jumped at the sound of a masculine voice at her elbow.

"Gimme a ride, lady? Take me to the country, lady? I like the coun——"

"Galen! So you're the thumber! Gee, this is a nice world!" She moved over on the seat. "You manage your own wheel—I want to talk. I didn't know short days ever could be so grand!"

"Whassa matter here! What y' holdin' that line up for? Get your buggy out o' there, Doctor, or I'll have to give y' a ticket!"

"Sorry! Pulling right out!"

"What happened to Rule 11?" Sabra demanded as they sped on toward the causeway.

"The MacLaren gave it to me as a going-away present," Galen said. "I had a day off unexpectedly. Fellow owed me one. I spent two hours of it bullying The MacLaren."

"*The MacLaren!*" Sabra gasped.

"Uh-huh. The one. The swell one. You know, I never knew that woman before, though I've talked to her plenty of times."

"So you bullied her, eh?"

"Ummm. Smart boy, I am."

"You'd better be smart," Sabra said. "I've got things to ask you about that nobody but a smart man could possibly answer." Now she could get that Bed 1 business straightened out.

CHAPTER XIII

DAY AFTER TOMORROW would be Change Day. On the bulletin board at noon the nurses would find their ward assignments for the coming week. Sabra hoped she would stay in Men's Medical, for she still had something there to settle. But there was something very important that she must do there this very morning, in case tomorrow it was too late.

After lunch was over that day of "Mrs. Windham's invitation" and all of Della's questions about training had been answered, Sabra and Galen had gone over the ranch affairs with the new foreman. She had visited all the cows and horses and sheep—the new sheep—and had chatted with old Ted and had patted Shane's red setter head continuously, she thought. After all of these things had been attended to she and Galen climbed to the top of the hills near the fence line, and she put up to him a hypothetical case as nearly like that matter of Bed 1 as she could without revealing who it was she was talking about.

Asked what he, as a doctor, would do in such a case, Galen replied unhesitatingly, "Get him well. Try to get him to come clean. If he wouldn't, and I was sure about him, I guess I'd have to report him. There's a law about that, you know. But he'd be on the up-and-up physically, first."

"Could a situation like that frighten a man so he wouldn't get well?"

"Oh." Galen smiled. "Might. Yes, probably would play hob with his nerves, keep him from resting and, hence, from rebuilding. Yes, it might prevent his recovery." Galen looked at her quizzically. "What you doing? Going in for writing melodramas?" She told him soberly that she had been thinking about the plot of one.

Shane came out of the brush below them just then, his body low, his tail down. He came straight to her and opened his mouth and delivered into her lap a cock quail with a broken leg.

"Oh! Someone's been shooting around here!" The Dunning lands were posted. She knew that old Ted fed the quail down near his quarters regularly. They came by the dozens in the early morning. "Can we do anything about this leg, Galen?" Galen was already on his feet.

"We can try," he said. They used a match for a splint and made a cage from a box frame and wire netting, doing a neat bit of brushwood camouflage on the inside for the patient's peace of mind. And both "patient and cubicle," as Sabra put it, were turned over to old Ted to take care of. Galen

promised to telephone for a report each evening for a few days.

They had been obliged to leave, eventually, but this departure was not an unhappy one. Everything about the ranch was running smoothly. The foreman was capable, pleasant, and a worker. He was going to be married soon. Old Della was getting considerable satisfaction out of the letters Sabra sent to her each week. She said she had never had many letters before. These were nice, like storybooks. A hospital must be a queer place, though, she said.

And in addition to everything else, Sabra thought, she herself knew at last what to do about her problem in Men's Medical. She was going to get Miss Burke to report to Miss MacLaren what she knew about Mr. Landow in Bed 1 and ask Miss MacLaren to transfer her to some other ward. Then the man in Bed 1 could get well. That would be fair to the man, fair to the doctors who had worked over him all these weeks, and fair to the community. Sabra was sure that the superintendent of nurses should know, because Miss Burke was only a junior nurse, and she should not have the responsibility which her knowledge of Bed 1's affairs imposed upon her if the hospital was likely to be involved in any legal investigation that might arise. For Galen said it would be involved. Of course, even in that connection, Galen still thought he was talking about a melodrama plot.

What she proposed to do should not be difficult

to accomplish, Sabra thought. It was all so sensible. And she had come on duty this morning full of energy after the first whole night's sleep she had had in days and days. The moment the night report was over and she had a chance to speak to Miss Burke she said, "I want to see you a moment today, if I may."

"You'll have to step," Miss Burke said. "My short day."

Well, Sabra thought, I can see her tonight if she's in her room, or first thing tomorrow if she's not. She was rather glad that Miss Burke would not be on the ward all day. Maybe she herself could have some success with Bed 1.

When the apparent needs of the patients had been taken care of Miss Gilbert reminded Sabra that she was to go off at eleven. "You'll have time to take the clothes from that patient in E around to the autoclave. They're still in the room." E was an isolation room, in which there was only one bed. It was part of Men's Medical Ward.

"This is an unclean case," Miss Gilbert said. "Be sure you put gloves on before you go in the room. You have been given full instruction in regard to handling the clothing of this kind of case?"

"Yes, Miss Gilbert."

"This particular case is assumed to be especially dirty. All of the clothing is assumed to be contaminated. You cannot be too careful. But do not lose sight of the fact, Miss Dunning, that, whatever the unpleasantness of his disease, the patient has come

into the hospital to be cured of it, not to be charged with it."

"I understand, Miss Gilbert." Sabra liked the straight thinking of her head nurse. "I will be careful of that too."

"Yes, I think you will. That's why I'm sending you in there."

Miss Wilbur had talked at some length in class about cases of this sort, helping them to realize their responsibility to the hospital and to the community as well as to such patients that they might have to take care of. "We must break down this century-old notion of disgrace," Miss Wilbur said, "when it is connected with disease. The real disgrace is in neglecting or refusing to take care of the disease. If the nurse makes a patient feel he is an outcast the chances are he will not go on with treatment. Then the disease persists and its distribution is widened."

This was Sabra's first experience with a case of the sort. She slowed as she approached the door, getting her professional self fully in hand.

"Good morning, Mr. Hillman. I've come to get your clothes to send to the wardrobe, so they will be in good shape for you when you're ready to leave. Have you anything in your pockets that you want to keep here?"

"No, guess not," the man in the bed answered in some embarrassment. "Not much there, I guess."

Sabra explained what she was doing as she made out the list. And when the clothes were taken care

of and only his wallet and papers and a few odds and ends remained, she left that long enough to ask him if he was quite comfortable.

"Oh yes. I'm comfortable all right," he said. "I guess I'm more comfortable than you are."

"Why do you think that?" The question leaped out before she saw its implications. "I *like* my work," she said.

"Yeah. Your work's all right, I guess. But you got to handle those clothes of mine. I notice you put on rubber gloves to do it with."

Sabra's expression did not change in the slightest. She put down the papers she had in her hand for listing, pulled back the cuff of one glove very carefully but very quickly with the rubber-covered fingers of her other hand, and held her bare wrist a few inches from his nose. "I've been working with a disinfectant, scrubbing utensils," she said quite truthfully. "You wouldn't want your clothes smelling of *that*, would you?" She let the fold of glove fall back, congratulating herself privately that she had practiced that trick, too, many times and knew how to avoid touching her bare skin with the gloved fingers.

Her patient laughed, and the reassurance that came into his eyes was all the atonement her white lie needed, Sabra was sure. The rest of this task took on a sort of shine for her and gave her a new kind of confidence. It had been a test, she knew, and she had not failed. Bed 1 was a test, too, in its way. She must not fail there, either.

She got a newspaper for this man to read, and after delivering the clothing to the autoclave, whence it would be sent over, thoroughly sterilized, to the wardrobe, she went quickly down the ward toward Miss Gilbert's desk.

"Utility room," Miss Gilbert said briefly, hardly glancing up.

Sabra went out to the utility room, that nerve center of the ward which seemed to need constant and incessant attention. It was there that Miss Wilbur found her a few moments later, going over the plumbing with a cloth and polisher.

"You seem to be making a good start," Miss Wilbur said. "Keep it up."

"Thank you, Miss Wilbur."

The instructor went out through the fire-escape door which was at the end of the ward, to the right of the utility-room door. It was the shortest way out from there, Sabra knew, but students were not permitted to use it.

When Miss Gilbert came and told her to go off duty Sabra asked if she might not finish polishing the taps. It would not take five minutes. But Miss Gilbert said no. It was just as important to go off duty on time as it was to be prompt coming on. In other words, Sabra thought to herself, I must fit my jobs to the time I have. That's what she was really telling me. It seemed to take a great deal of experience. I'd certainly better learn it before we undertake any clinic work out at the ranch.

There was class in nursing practice that day

from eleven-fifteen until twelve-fifteen, and the probationers were to go to second-serving lunch. The period was given over to the discussion of problems that had arisen during the last few days of their work on the wards.

"Has anyone had difficulty with a patient?" Miss Wilbur asked.

"I did!" Miss Schramm said, as if she had been waiting for an opportunity to announce it. "She was an old crank, to begin with, and she was peevish because she had what she called a green nurse to give her a bath. She wasn't sick. She's just a heart case."

"Did you have an opportunity to read her chart, Miss Schramm?"

"Yes, Miss Wilbur. There wasn't much in it. She's getting only one medicine—but I didn't have anything to do with that."

"Did you read her history, Miss Schramm?"

"Yes. She's married. She's got four children; the youngest is five, and the oldest is eleven. Her husband works in a bakery. She's been in the hospital only two weeks. I think that's all that was important. I read it carefully." Miss Schramm was pleased with her recitation.

Miss Wilbur, on the other hand, seemed to have some doubts. She asked whether the patient was sleeping well and learned that the chart said she slept very little, but that did not seem to Miss Schramm a sufficient excuse for her being so cranky.

"Maybe I didn't sleep so much, either, but I wasn't like a bear with a sore head."

Someone stifled a laugh, but Miss Wilbur's expression of studying did not change. "What do you suppose she thought about while she was not sleeping, Miss Schramm?"

"Why, how could I know? It's none of my business what she thinks about."

"Oh, now we've struck something," Miss Wilbur said. "It is exactly your business, Miss Schramm. Not your business to repeat, not your business to discuss, not your business to speculate about, but absolutely your business to try to understand. You say she has four children. The youngest is five, and the oldest is eleven. They're all little, aren't they? Their father is employed. You didn't tell me who is taking care of the children."

"I don't know."

"Might she be worried about them?"

"Why, yes, I guess she might."

"A little tot of five. Just a baby. Would you worry about that one?"

"I guess I might."

"And perhaps about what the oldest one was doing after school?"

"I guess so."

"And about whether they were getting the care they needed, and going to school clean, and getting the right food, and a thousand other things this woman has been doing for years that suddenly she was unable to do? And above all that she might

be thinking about how long she was going to be ill. Maybe her doctor had told her, as they usually have to in heart cases, that she must do very little work from now on. No lifting, no standing too long, no getting too tired, no hurrying, no worrying—when all her life, probably, she's been doing each of those things day in and day out. Do you think any of that might worry her?"

"Yes, I guess it would." Miss Schramm sounded puzzled.

"Could it account for her being irritable, Miss Schramm?"

"Yes, Miss Wilbur."

"Now, if you had thought that out while you were carrying the bath pan to her bed, what could you have done about it?"

"Well, maybe it wouldn't have mattered if she was cranky."

"But your point of view is wrong, Miss Schramm. You have been considering the effect of the patient upon yourself. You should have been considering the effect that you, as a nurse, have upon the patient. She has put herself in our care, let me remind you, for the purpose of recovering her health. You knew a good deal about her from her history, but none of that apparently was turned into a subject for pleasant conversation while you gave her her bath after a worried night.

"The children are probably all in school except the youngest. You could have asked about them. Do they like their teachers? What grades are they

in? Vacation has just finished—did the oldest boy have a job? Did the others go to the playgrounds? Who had charge of the playground—a man or a woman? What bakery does her husband work in? Does he do bread, or cakes, or pies? You see, Miss Schramm, you had a perfect mine of material and you didn't turn over a single stone trying to cheer that woman for her day."

"I guess I didn't."

"Do you think you will be able to next time, Miss Schramm?"

"Oh, day after tomorrow's Change Day! Do I have to go back there again?"

Miss Wilbur looked at her watch. The room was very still. When she spoke again there was a new seriousness in her eyes, seriousness with a hint of sadness in it. (She takes our failures as her own failures! Sabra thought suddenly.) "Miss Schramm," Miss Wilbur said, "I am going to do something which I imagine has not been done before. The clinic patient of whom you have been speaking, Mrs. Flinder, is a case I happen to know about. You will report to your ward, Miss Schramm, and tell your head nurse you have been sent by me to get information from your patient's chart. I want you to copy Mrs. Flinder's address, then go to your room and change to street clothes. I want you to go to the patient's home and, if possible, talk with the little five-year-old boy. If he isn't in his own yard he will be next door. The neighbor woman is taking care of him and the

others while the mother is here. The older children will be in school, I think, but find out all you can about them. You will report to one o'clock lunch and to class here at one-thirty. It is only a few blocks to their house. You may go at once."

"Yes, Miss Wilbur." Miss Schramm looked decidedly disconcerted. She went out quickly.

"Tell us about your patient, Miss Lennox." Miss Wilbur brought their thoughts back into the room.

"My first one," said Miss Lennox, rising, "was the biggest, fattest Negro woman you ever saw, 'n' I shuah did give her a bath! She laughed all the time, and her abdomen flopped so, it sounded as though I was slappin' her wif de wash cloth!"

The class laughed unrestrainedly. Miss Lennox had been in Third South, she said, and everything went smoothly with her patients. "But I'm afraid they were easy to please."

Miss Laredo said she had taken care of a naughty little bandit from the Italian section of the city. "He had to have a tub bath, and we nearly wrecked the bathroom, between us."

"Pedro?"

"Yes, Miss Wilbur."

"He's a little devil. He is, as you know, a malnutrition case. He's terribly bad, but if we can keep him happy we've won half the battle. What did you do afterward?" It was a foregone conclusion, Miss Wilbur said, that you had more than one patient in that ward.

Miss Laredo had given a bed bath to a little girl

of seven. It went smoothly, she said, but so very bashfully. "She was the shyest little thing."

"What did you do to help her be at ease?"

"Not the right thing, I'm afraid, Miss Wilbur. I was telling her a story about a little yellow duckling I know, but——"

"Yes?"

"We couldn't finish it. Miss Read told me there was no time for stories, and the little girl cried all the rest of the bath."

This incident led to the discussion of how to wedge into the day's routine the little human things which every thinking nurse felt the lack of in a busy ward. "We must strive all the time for a balance between the things that have to be done for each patient as a case and the things we want to do for each patient as a person," Miss Wilbur said. "Let me urge all of you to guard against becoming hardened. Sometimes it will seem that that is the only way to survive. You will have days and nights when there isn't a second to think. It is easy to become discouraged. You have to fight against turning hard in self-defense. There is only one alternative that I know of, and that is to keep so cheerful, so sane-minded, so steady, so happy within yourselves, that you will be able to take at least some sunniness to each patient every day. A few specially gifted people have a spark in them that nothing can down, but most of us have to develop it from very scant beginnings. It is one of the most serious personal tasks you'll meet.

"Does your little girl know how to read, Miss Laredo?"

"Yes. But she's going home tomorrow."

"She might be delighted to receive a letter from the yellow duckling himself, telling her the rest of that story. After she *has* gone home, I hasten to add. If only one child in that ward received a letter we'd have a riot on our hands!"

Miss Laredo said she was sure the duckling would write. "I'd never have thought of that!"

There were other, more technical, problems which occupied the remainder of the class period. Toward the end Miss Wilbur gave Matilda her regular morning care, and the class stood in a circle around her, taking notes preparatory to criticizing her work. When they had finished she told them that if they could be at least one fifth as critical of their own work as they had proved they could be of hers she had an idea their progress in the future would be very rapid. "Each mistake I made," she said, "has been made by one or another of you on the ward." She sent them off to lunch with a smile, but each one of them was thoroughly impressed with the ability of the instructor in nursing practice to 'keep tabs' on them.

The afternoon session of the class had just begun when Miss Schramm came in. Miss Wilbur asked at once for a report on her visit.

Miss Schramm stood up. She looked around the class and then turned a penetrating look on Miss Wilbur. "My visit, I think, wasn't so important as

something I found on the way back," she said finally.

"Something you found, Miss Schramm?" Miss Wilbur's voice carried a note of disappointment.

"Yes. Perhaps I should say something I discovered. But I will tell you first about my visit, since you asked about that."

Miss Wilbur was still standing. Several of the probationers glanced from her to Miss Schramm and back again at that last remark. But Miss Wilbur said nothing. There was a look of suspended judgment in her eyes, Sabra thought, intensely interested, herself, in this little drama.

"The place was easy to find," Miss Schramm said. "The little boy was on the steps, crying, when I got there. The woman next door was calling him, and he didn't want to go. He said he wanted to stay home and wait for his mother."

Miss Wilbur sat down, nothing but interest on her face now, and Miss Schramm continued:

"So I mopped his face for him and told him I'd been talking to his mother this morning and that she couldn't come home for a few days yet. And then, after a while, I asked him if he'd like to send a message to his mother. He gave me this." Miss Schramm took from her uniform pocket a small package wrapped in newspaper. She opened it and held it out on her palm for them all to see. A large glass marble, a whistle, a little ball of string, a toy police star. She put the package down on the arm of the chair.

"Then he showed me the washing his father had done last night, and we ironed most of it. While we were doing that the woman next door came over and told me he wouldn't eat his meals. So I stayed for lunch in order to tell his mother that he had eaten a bigger meal than she eats herself. Then, let's see. Oh yes, we went and had an ice-cream cone, and—and, except for the fact that I cut lunch at the hospital, that is about all of my visit.

"As for what I found—that isn't so easy to tell about. You sort of expected me to find something, didn't you, Miss Wilbur?"

"Perhaps."

"I—I don't believe I know how to tell you about the rest of it," Miss Schramm said at last, "but I can promise you this—you needn't ever worry about my thinking a patient is cranky again." She began picking up the articles from the boy's "message to his mother," giving them an exaggerated attention. "I wanted to hug him," she said with a low chuckle, "but I didn't."

"Why not, Miss Schramm?"

"My goodness, Miss Wilbur! You can't hug a great big grown-up man like that!"

The rest of the class hour was spent reviewing hospital vocabulary. Queer-sounding phrases and abbreviations and odd combinations of letters. Q 4 H, meaning every four hours; Q 2 H, every two hours; P.R.N., as reason dictates; A.C. and P.C., before and after meals. They reviewed pro-

cedures for making distilled water, the storage of sterile water, the making of a solution called "normal salt," which became associated in their minds with a fearfully long and almost unpronounceable word, *hypodermoclysis*.

"I'll never be able to curl my tongue around that word," one of them remarked as they left the classroom. "It sounds like the noise a youngster makes with an all-day sucker that's too big to swallow and too hard to bite."

"Hy-po-der-moc-lysis," Sabra Dunning said slowly to herself. "It does sound exactly like that. And I've already got two all-day suckers—the personal problem and the problem in Bed 1." She had not been able to see Miss Burke today. She was determined to see her tomorrow.

But that day again there was not a single opportunity. She even thought once or twice that Miss Burke was determined to prevent an opportunity. On Change Day, at noon, the probationers' comments buzzed about the bulletin board like a party line with all the receivers down, until a graduate nurse scattered them with "My word, what a racket!" Sabra was assigned to Men's Medical again, and she was smiling broadly about that when Bianca Laredo came up.

"Where do you go?" Bianca asked. "I'm back on Kids'."

Sabra told her. "And am I glad. The night head nurse sleeps right across the fireplace from me too! Miss Borland, I mean."

"Huh—you sleep on your ward, do you? You can bet we don't sleep where I'm going. We work—but we like it."

"Goof!" Sabra exclaimed. "Isn't it funny the way every one of us thinks she's got the best place in the hospital?"

* * *

As she approached the desk at report next morning Sabra saw a smile on Miss Borland's face, and it made her happy. Oh, I'm so glad I'm still on this ward, she thought. Now today I'll get this Bed 1 business settled, and I'll have only the patients to think about. "Good morning, Miss Gilbert."

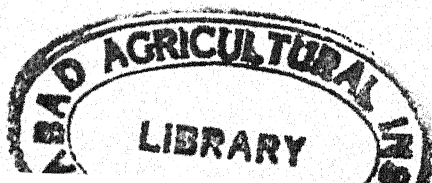
"Good morning. I'm glad you're back."

"Thank you, Miss Gilbert." No spilling over this time. "Good morning, Miss Borland."

Miss Borland returned the greeting, adding, "Glad you got it." She knew how much Sabra wanted to be assigned here again.

Sabra was aware that Miss Borland was much concerned over Mr. Landow in Bed 1. They had talked of him guardedly several times across the space between the two beds. Well, surely today would see a change for him, Sabra thought. She had no doubt at all that Miss Burke would see the wisdom and the kindness in doing what she was going to suggest to her.

The rest of the staff arrived on the stroke of seven, and they stood in their neat line, the night head nurse at Miss Gilbert's right, the day staff in



order of precedence, based on their time in training, at Miss Gilbert's left. Sabra, the probationer, at the end of the line, curving it a little to hear Miss Borland's quiet report, hoping when it was finished that she herself would read a night report that way sometime not too far off. Then the neatly ruled report book was handed to the day head nurse.

There would be none of that for her, Sabra knew, until she had her cap. But now she must concentrate on the orders which Miss Gilbert was giving the day staff. Miss Borland had gone, her head up, her steps quiet, her eyes serious, a clear smile on her mouth for the patients' sake as she went past.

Eventually Miss Gilbert said, "Miss Dunning, you will take 1 and 3. This is Mr. Landow's bath morning. Take your time. Do him second."

"Yes, Miss Gilbert." (Bed 1! I hope I can get him to talk!) She was glad that Miss Burke, who was still on duty here, had been assigned to patients at the other end of the ward. If Miss Burke knew anything of the number of times Sabra had tried to get her on the telephone at her room yesterday she said nothing of it. Sabra had paid particular attention to Miss Burke's duty schedule for today when Miss Gilbert announced it. "I'll get to talk to her today or know why."

Then the day's orders were complete, and down the long ward as the line broke up there was a movement of expectancy in a good many of the beds. The patients had all had their faces and

hands washed and had brushed their teeth. That was attended to by the night staff, between six and seven. Now they would have breakfast.

The morning raced along. The patient in Bed 1 would not answer questions. All he would do was ask them. And he asked Sabra the same ones she knew he had been asking Miss Borland, time and again, and doubtless other nurses too. Which ones of them *were* nurses? he wanted to know. It was a question that was never answered to his satisfaction. And the answer they always gave him, the true answer, was always received with the same bitter comment: "You lie to me."

He said it to Sabra this morning when she assured him, with the straightest look she knew how to give anyone, that all of the staff were nurses, that no one but a nurse would ever be allowed here in a nurse's uniform. She knew now how it felt to have a desperately sick man look at her and say those four grim words, "You lie to me." She knew how it felt to hear those words and at the same time *know why he said them*. And for the thousandth time she vowed to herself, Miss Burke's got to get out of here with her horrid knowledge. She's got to get out of here.

But it was afternoon before there was any chance to speak to Miss Burke, and when Sabra did speak to her, in the privacy of the linen closet, Miss Burke was angry.

"What d'you think I am?" she demanded. "You'd better pipe down about that, I think. It's

none of your business. I was a dub to tell you anything. Probationers never do have any sense about what a nurse is up against!" And she went out of the linen closet, her eyes flashing, her color high, almost colliding with Miss Gilbert about to go off duty and who paused, instead, to look into the linen closet.

"What are you doing here, Miss Dunning? Is there not enough to attend to on the ward, or is there too much, that you must come here to rest?"

Sabra straightened up and met that sharp criticism with a pair of very troubled eyes. "I am very sorry, Miss Gilbert."

"You must not lose sight of the fact that every hour of your probationary period goes into your record, Miss Dunning."

"I understand, Miss Gilbert."

"You may go on with your work." Miss Gilbert put a brief knife-sharp emphasis on the last word and went out of the ward. As Sabra returned toward the desk Bed 1's light went on. Her patient wanted a drink. She poured the water, placed the bent glass tube he used for drinking, and held it to his withered lips. He took a swallow or two and lay back, wearied by the exertion.

"Why you tell me lies?" he asked, looking up at her with his apprehensive eyes, as if he thought she might treat him more kindly.

"But I don't, Mr. Landow," she said. "I don't. Truly. We are all nurses. Every one of us." How could she prove it to him? And what good would

the proof do, knowing what she knew, and with him knowing what he knew?

"Everybody lies," he said bitterly. "Maybe I die pretty quick. Then it don't matter."

Sabra swallowed and said nothing. She fixed his pillows as gently as she could. She made sure his hot-water bottle was warm and in place. She turned the pillow underneath his bone-thin knees, and before she left him she looked down at him again, feeling his deep glance boring into her. "You'll put your light on, won't you, if you want anything?"

He looked away without answering.

The next day it was the same, only worse, Sabra thought. The same questions, the same bitter comment, the same deep, frightened look whenever she met his eyes. She was actually relieved that afternoon when she could hide herself in the utility room, cleaning equipment there. And as she cleaned she thought and thought. I've got to make her do something. I've got to. Sabra dropped a large metal utensil. It made a frightful clatter on the tiled floor. Miss Gilbert came like a gust of wind and stared at her with hostile eyes an instant.

"A sharp noise like that is dreadful for sick people, Miss Dunning."

"Of course. I'm ashamed to death, Miss Gilbert."

Miss Gilbert was gone again. How did I ever drop anything so big as that? Sabra asked herself. Two black marks in two days. I'll never get a cap.

I've wasted this whole three months. I haven't learned the most rudimentary thing about nursing, for I haven't learned to keep my head. I haven't learned not to let things get on a personal basis. Miss Burke's a junior—she knows better than I do what to do. I'm slopping over being sorry for that man, and that's the very thing Miss Wilbur has warned us about time and again. She told us it would ball up our work, and it certainly does. Nurse! Huh, you'd think I was watching a moving picture and crying all over the place!

The scrub brush with which she was working at the moment leaped from her fingers, cut a steep curve in the air, and fell miraculously back into her frantic hands again, but not before the water from it had left a wide, spotty arc across her fresh apron. Blunder of blunders! The last thing that would be tolerated was an untidy uniform. Sabra stood there looking down at it, not seeing it at all. All she could see, no matter where she looked, was that pair of deep, frightened eyes. She set the scrub brush down carefully, feeling a sudden stab of pain in her throat.

I can't stand it! She shut her teeth against the cry and went swiftly out into the ward to Miss Gilbert's desk.

Miss Gilbert was writing. She looked up in the middle of a word, her pen lifted. "What is it, Miss Dunning?"

"Miss Gilbert—is it ever permitted—may I go to Miss MacLaren's office—to Miss MacLaren, I

mean—now—right now—about something important?"

Miss Gilbert's brows drew together slightly. "Something about your work, Miss Dunning?" Miss Gilbert's eyes saw the soiled apron.

"No, Miss Gilbert, not exactly, but it's about ——" Sabra hesitated.

"About this ward, Miss Dunning?" A suggestion of a smile came into the head nurse's eyes. "You are not going to report us for inefficiency, I hope? Perhaps it can wait until you are off duty, Miss Dunning?"

Sabra shook her head with a quick little jerk and followed that mannerism which she had been sure she had overcome long ago with another much worse one, which she had also thought was out of the way forever. Her left hand went up almost automatically for a quick pat at her hair. "Excuse me, Miss Gilbert. It shouldn't wait. I'm sure it shouldn't wait."

"Is it something you have just discovered, Miss Dunning?" Miss Gilbert's glance rested on the water spots again a moment before she looked up to Sabra's face and continued: "I can't imagine what you could wish to discuss with Miss MacLaren before you have taken it up with me. I am your head nurse, you know, and I am in charge in Men's Medical. When did this very important matter occur?"

"It hasn't occurred exactly, Miss Gilbert. But I've known about it for weeks."

"Then why have you not asked for this permission before?"

"I couldn't make up my mind—I wasn't sure what to——"

"Oh. Then if it has taken weeks to make up your mind, perhaps an hour or two longer will not be serious delay. I think it will be best for you to go on with your work, Miss Dunning."

"But I can't stand it any longer!" Sabra whispered, more to herself than to Miss Gilbert, as she turned away from the desk.

Miss Gilbert got up out of her chair and came around to walk beside her. "You are not ill, Miss Dunning? It isn't that?"

"Oh no, Miss Gilbert, of course not. I——" She stopped, her face clearing instantly, for there was Miss MacLaren entering the ward.

"Perhaps we can take care of it presently," Miss Gilbert said quietly, going to meet the superintendent of nurses.

Sabra went back to the utility room. In a few moments Miss Burke came to the door. "Miss Gilbert wants you in the treatment room, Miss Dunning," and she added significantly, "Miss MacLaren's there."

"Thank you, Miss Burke." Sabra waited until the junior had taken her speculative eyes away and then passed her, going to the treatment room. She slowed as she approached the open door. Miss Gilbert and Miss MacLaren were both facing it.

Sabra felt a quick flush rise in her face, and then she could feel it drain out again. "Good morning—I mean good afternoon, Miss MacLaren." It was hard to think, hard to speak steadily.

Miss MacLaren's eyes were penetrating. "Miss Gilbert tells me that you wish to speak to me, Miss Dunning."

"Yes, if you please, Miss MacLaren. I'm sorry about my appearance. I had an accident."

"Very well, what is it?"

"May I——" Sabra sent an appealing glance at Miss Gilbert. "May I see you alone, Miss MacLaren?"

Miss MacLaren's expression did not change, but there was a modification in her voice which Sabra could not evaluate. "Miss Gilbert has told me that you wish to speak to me about something concerning this ward, Miss Dunning. Since Miss Gilbert is the head nurse here, she is as interested as I in any report that may be made."

"Can I—can I be sure of not being overheard?"

"Certainly." Miss MacLaren took one quick step, stood at the doorway an instant, and then closed the door and pressed the stop clamp down with her foot to hold it shut. "Now," she said somewhat kindly, "what is it, Miss Dunning?"

"We have a patient here," Sabra addressed both of them, "who is very ill. And he is very frightened. I am sure he does not get well because he is so frightened. A nurse on duty here says—I mean

that the reason why he is so frightened has been told to me by a nurse on duty in this ward. I can't come here any longer, knowing about it and not doing something about it, if it is true, and I am convinced that it is."

"Frightened?" Miss MacLaren asked, her voice incredulous. "Frightened? What could a patient possibly be frightened of here, Miss Dunning?"

"Of the nurse, Miss MacLaren—and—and of what she knows."

"I don't understand what you are getting at. You are saying that a nurse in this ward is frightening a patient. But you can't possibly mean any such thing as that. What is it that you do mean?" Miss MacLaren was leaning toward her, almost peering into her face, Sabra thought.

"But that is what I do mean, Miss MacLaren. Even if I have to be branded a tattletale, I've got to tell someone who can do something about it."

"Extraordinary!" Miss MacLaren said, as if to herself. "Which patient do you mean?"

"The man in Bed 1—Mr. Landow."

"What!" Miss Gilbert exclaimed. "Frightened—oh, I'm afraid you are——" But Miss MacLaren's extended hand stopped her.

"Tell us about it," Miss MacLaren said to Sabra.

As briefly as she could Sabra reported what she had been told by Miss Burke, not once mentioning the nurse by name. She began with the tea-room incident, went on with what Miss Burke had said

that day of the exploded flask, and on through the attempts she had made to get Miss Burke to report the whole matter. On until today, when it became unbearable.

"I discussed it with Galen as a hypothetical case" (Galen's name had slipped out unnoticed) "but I couldn't accomplish what that talk made me decide to do. I tried. I know I'm only a probationer, but nobody has a right to take advantage of a sick man like that. Maybe she doesn't realize. I couldn't get her to listen to me when I tried to tell her what she's doing. What does a little publicity matter when the doctors and everybody here are trying to get him well and she keeps him sick? We're all nurses here. We're not policemen. I think it's shameful."

"If it is true it is worse than shameful, Miss Dunning," Miss MacLaren said. "Are you quite sure that this nurse, whom you have not named, is not just telling you a story?"

"Oh no, Miss MacLaren. She's much too sure of her importance because she knows about him. I—I shouldn't have said that. But she seems that way to me."

Miss MacLaren glanced at Miss Gilbert. "I've no idea how long we've been talking—do you want to look down your ward before we continue?"

Miss Gilbert glanced at her watch. "Only seven minutes, Miss MacLaren. I'll be back at once." She went out, and Miss MacLaren stood there silently, waiting.

There was a chair placed tight against the treatment-room desk. Sabra pulled it out and turned it, offering it to the superintendent.

"Thank you." Miss MacLaren sat down. She did not speak again until Miss Gilbert returned, and then only after what seemed to Sabra a very long scrutiny of both the head nurse and the probationer.

"It all sounds so absurdly melodramatic," she said at last. "It is hardly believable." She looked up at Sabra. "But I must admit that you do not sound like an excitable young woman. Miss Dunning, why do you suppose it was you whom this nurse selected to confide in?"

"Unless it was because I myself said his eyes looked frightened, Miss MacLaren, I'm sure I don't know. She wouldn't be trying to impress a probationer, surely."

"How did you happen to notice him so closely as that?"

Sabra told of the hospital-tour day, when everything was new and small things made big impressions. Then she had noticed him again her first day in the ward. "And he has been my patient this week, Miss MacLaren." Miss Gilbert endorsed her opinion that the man was apprehensive, but she said that so many patients were if it happened to be their first hospital experience.

"As you said, Miss Dunning," Miss MacLaren spoke again, "we are all nurses here. Our job is to get the man well first, whatever the truth of this

story may be. But you must realize that I shall have to know who that nurse is." She looked at Sabra and waited. So did Miss Gilbert.

Sabra looked at the floor, thinking. What would I want if I were Miss Burke, she asked herself, applying a childhood rule in this time of adult stress. When she met Miss MacLaren's eyes again her mind was made up. "That nurse should tell you herself, Miss MacLaren. I can't be an informer except for the patient's sake. You know about him now. I've told you that part."

"Yes, you have. But how am I to protect him when I do not know whom to protect him from? Do you suggest that I change the entire staff of this ward?"

Sabra had not thought that far. This thing was increasing in size like a snowball going downhill through drifts. Miss MacLaren's voice was almost sharp with that last question. Sabra's cheeks felt as if two hot coins were pressed against them. She shook her head with that little jerk and made a quick pat at her hair before she thought and was amazed to see a flicker of a smile cross Miss MacLaren's face. But she stood her ground.

"I'm sorry, Miss MacLaren. But she must tell you herself. I'll try to make her tell you. I'll—I'll have to let her know that I have told you about the man's side of it. I—I hope you'll let me try——" Sabra stopped, half stammering, unable to read the expressions of these two older women, these two graduates in white, with their steady

eyes and their quiet hands and their controlled voices.

Miss MacLaren was getting up; Miss Gilbert was stepping back a bit. The superintendent's face turned more inscrutable than ever. "I shall expect to know before five tomorrow, Miss Dunning." She turned to Miss Gilbert. "The patient can, of course, be transferred first thing in the morning."

Sabra reached for the door and held it open. Miss MacLaren's head bent imperceptibly in acknowledgment, and she went out. Miss Gilbert walked with her down the ward. Sabra let the door swing shut, felt with her shoe to be sure the clamp was free, and stood staring at the treatment room.

Miss Murdoch came in so swiftly, the door almost struck Sabra. "Sorry!" Miss Murdoch said. "I'm late with my medicines."

She knows they've been talking to me, Sabra thought, going out into the ward. Thank goodness there's a light! It was way down the ward, and it was something to do at once. The man wanted only a drink of water, and that did not take long. She poured it for him and propped his shoulders while he drank, freshening his bed before she left him.

The day hurried along. For a while Sabra was out in the treatment room once more, scrubbing, this time. Polishing nickel-plated sterilizers, washing white enameled shelves, rubbing Bon Ami on and off the white enameled basins of odd shapes.

Polishing, scrubbing, arranging, the perpetual motion of all hospitals, the job that was never finished—that never would be finished, so long as there are probs, so long as there are nickel-plated things and enamel ware and white shelves and treatment and utility rooms.

Nurses hurried in and out. Now and then a doctor came in, putting down unclean things where only clean things should go. A porter came with his big mop and went away again, leaving the floor damp and dangerous beneath the smell of wet tile. And the prob polished and scrubbed and arranged.

And then it was time for four o'clock temperatures. Miss Murdoch glanced at Sabra once, as she began the round of the ward with the thermometer tray, and went on with her work at the desk.

Sabra went from bed to bed, checking pulse rates, checking respiration rates, recording them on her small pad. Chatting lightly with each patient, if he was well enough, during his enforced moments of silence. Telling them little light bits of things, trying to conjure a smile on the wan faces here and there. Down one side of the ward and up the other she went, interested, sympathetic, trying to be very alert, looking very tired.

When she went into the treatment room to put the tray away Miss Burke was there, sterilizing a hypodermic syringe. "Been on the carpet, hey?" She sent a sidelong glance at Sabra. "Funny they'd

nail you on the ward. You usually get to go to the office for any razzing."

Sabra did not answer. She could not think of anything to say.

"I was only kidding you," Miss Burke said. "We all get razzed once in a while. Don't let it throw you."

If she'd only keep still! Sabra thought. "I must chart my T.P.R.s," she said aloud, going out as quickly as she could. There was almost an audible click in her mind, she thought, as she cut off that whole business and concentrated solely on the matter in hand. There must be no mistakes in charting these temperatures and pulses and respirations.

The huge bulk of the late afternoon's needs moved inexorably down the length of Men's Medical. Linen to be sorted and put away, each piece just so on its shelf. Visitors to be steered homeward. Ante-cibum medicines, charting; trays to be served and carried out again, charting; post-cibum medicines, charting; screens, bedpans, charting; urinals, measuring, charting; clank of large sterilizers, tinkle of glass tubes in tumblers; then a lull—human bodies digesting food.

Sabra was sent to late dinner, six-thirty. The meal consisted of boiled potatoes, sliced tomatoes, and Booth sardines. She followed the example of several others and ate bread and milk from a glass. Miss Lennox came in and sat beside her.

"Hello—are you on late too?" Miss Lennox was quieter than usual.

"Yes, until seven-thirty. I'm being juvenile about dinner. I'm not hungry."

"I think I'll do likewise. But I want some coffee."

Ralph brought them coffee, and they drank it black.

"Do you know," Madge Lennox said after a long silence, "I'm going to keep a diary in this place. Have you ever seen anything like it?"

No, Sabra never had.

CHAPTER XIV

BEFORE she had finished supper that night Sabra had her mind made up once more. She would see Miss Burke immediately after dinner, if possible, during the brief half hour that remained of her own duty schedule. If she was not successful then she would see Miss Burke at eight, when she, too, would be off duty. She would see her in the hospital, in her room, on the street, anywhere, but she would see her. "I've got until five o'clock tomorrow," she said under her breath, "but I'm going to finish this today."

It ended in her seeing Miss Burke at her room—two houses down the street—at fifteen minutes before ten, with the deadline of ten o'clock prodding every word she spoke to this defiant junior whose tongue could be so sharp and slangy or (when she was speaking to Miss Gilbert) so very correct; this junior with her gossipy mind and her disrespectful manners. Sabra convinced her at the outset that what she had to say was both important

and private, and for once Miss Burke shut the door and her own talkative mouth and listened.

The fact which Sabra announced at the beginning—that she had talked with Miss MacLaren—was enough to give pause to almost anyone. But even though she had seen as much of this girl as she had, Sabra was not ready for Miss Burke's reaction now.

Miss Burke's lip curled in a contemptuousness which Sabra suspected she hoped would cover her concern. And then she said, "Look, Dunning. You say you've told Miss MacLaren all about it. Well, I've only had my cap about three months, and I'm not letting it get blown off my head for any trouble-making prob like you, see? You've told MacLaren, you say. Now I suggest that you get busy and prove what you told her. And I wish you luck. Ten o'clock's my bedtime. You'd better scam if you want to get into your house without having to go to the office. I understand you've been there several times lately, but maybe you can afford a record like that. Me, I'm not so clever. Good night."

Sabra went out without a word. Her head was aching; her ears were ringing; she wanted to laugh, and she wanted to cry—and she did both before she reached the door of her own house just on the dot of ten o'clock.

"Good girl!" Miss Streeter whispered from under the covers. "You're just in—— Why, what's wrong, Sabra? Is something——"

Sabra flung herself down on her bed, choking

back sobs. Miss Streeter got up and came over to stand there a moment, a hand on Sabra's shoulder.

"Hush, hush, child. Come on, get undressed and have your bath. We all get 'em sometimes. Come on, have your tub now and get to sleep."

Sabra rolled over, herself partly in hand at least. "I'm all right," she mumbled. "I'm sorry to be so silly. Thanks. You should have just shaken me."

"Fiddle!" Miss Streeter went back to bed, and a moment later Sabra went out to bathe.

At half-past ten the doorbell rang with a persistent clamor in that silent house. Miss Markey went to answer it. "What on earth's the matter?" she demanded. "Oh. I'll sign for it. She's in bed." She came back into the room, where all of them were still awake, carrying a large transparent florist's box. "So was I in bed," she remarked, "but I'll get up any time to bring our prob something like this." She put the box in Sabra's hands.

"Oh! Cecile Breuners!" Sabra exclaimed, lifting out the dozens of baby roses which lay like a fragile pink cushion in the box. She held them up, spilling from her two hands. "Look! Turn on your lights and look!" (Every single one of them thinks we've had a spat, she thought, and that he's sent me these to make up!) There were so many of the tiny roses that she could see only one thing to do with them, and before she was back in bed again to read the card in the small sealed envelope, there was a bunch of them in a drinking glass on every chest in the room.

The card said, "Where you been? I'm celebratin'. Pin 'em on your bib. Galen."

But not even roses could shut out her failure with Miss Burke. Not even Galen's note helped her to grow quiet inside. She was lying straight and still on the high narrow bed, still wide awake an hour and a half later. All of them were awake. The atmosphere was full of nerves, Sabra thought guiltily, knowing quite well that her own entrance at ten o'clock was responsible for it.

Once again she had allowed the personal to supersede everything else, and this time she had dragged down the whole room with her. Only Miss Borland had missed being upset. For they had managed to whisper through it all—the tears, the roses, their dreary rehearsal of how stiff a job nursing could be. Though that last was mostly after Miss Borland had gone on duty for her night shift in Men's Medical. With the senior gone they forgot to whisper, and now they were too exhausted to sleep, too overwrought. They might as well wait until Webber came in. She had a late pass. She would be in before long—she'd better be. She had about ten minutes more.

They lay there talking back and forth about this and that, watching the flicker of the small fire which nowadays was a more or less regular thing in their little grate in the evenings, for old Ted had loaded the back of Galen's car with neatly tied fagots of willow that last short day at home.

Miss Webber came in breathlessly. "Say! *Did you hear?*"

"What?" They sat up in unison.

"Patient beat it out of Men's Medical!"

Sabra stared at her, wide eyed in the dim light.

"Beat it?" Miss Streeter demanded. "*Beat it?* What do you mean?"

"Just that. Beat it, slick and clean. Borland's nearly crazy. He was there at report; he was there at eleven-fifty and gone at eleven fifty-five. It's all over the house. The girl at the board told me. Borlie was fixing a hypo for somebody. She had the treatment-room door shut because of the light."

"What patient?" Sabra asked slowly, still unable to take it in.

"I don't know his name. Some man they've had for ages. They say he's been nutty for a long time. Out of the first bed."

"Oh—I know about that!" Sabra hadn't known it was possible to feel so relieved. "He hasn't run away. It's just a mistake. But what an awful thing to get started! He was to be transferred. Why, Miss Borland must know about——"

"Mistake your eye!" Miss Webber interrupted her. "He went out through the fire-escape door. Left the door open. They found his blanket in the court. He evidently went out the ambulance entrance that's right there. He took the gateman's overcoat off the nail where he keeps it. They say there was an accident case came in about then, but nobody saw him. At least that's what they

think. That fire-escape door's the only door in the house there's nobody stationed right in front of all the time."

"But, good heavens, could he have walked so far?"

"Well, he's gone."

"There must be—some—mistake," Sabra repeated.

"I'd sure hope so if I were in that ward," Miss Streeter said. "There's nothing like that to queer a nurse, or a hospital, either, for that matter. I'd hate to be responsible for anything like that. I'd remember it to my dying day."

So shall I; so shall I—the thought burned Sabra's mind. "But I do know about it," she said aloud. "I do know one thing. Miss Borland's not responsible for that."

"Of course she is, Dunny. She's head nurse on night staff, isn't she? Of course she's responsible. You can't back out of that—no matter how you step. Not if you're head nurse. But never mind, Prob. You weren't on duty. You're lucky. They can't question you about it. You probably won't even hear of it, except right now. Maybe at report, though I shouldn't think they'd mention it at report. Forget it now and get to sleep. All sorts of things can happen in a big hospital, just all sorts of things. But turn 'em off now and go to sleep."

"Turn 'em off!" Sabra did not sleep.

* * *

Breakfast time arrived. Sabra ordered cereal. "That's slippery," she said. But slippery or not, she

could not eat it. There was a constrained buzz of talk in the dining room this morning. The story of Men's Medical's disgrace was truly, as Miss Webber had said, "all over the house." Madge Lennox had been at the probationers' table, all alone, when Sabra and the others came in, and they had barely settled in their chairs before Miss Lennox said distinctly, "Let's talk about something cheerful so I can wake up." Sabra thought gratefully, her eyes on her plate, that you could trust Madge Lennox always to keep her head.

The elevator was practically empty again at the first floor as they went to their various wards after breakfast, and at Macey First several others got in. Among them was Miss Burke. Her eyes were like flint, and she ignored Sabra's formal good morning—probationer to a nurse her senior. It was a greeting which could be made conspicuous only by failing to give it. "I hear they gotta——" the elevator operator began.

"Pipe down!" Miss Burke ordered sharply with a look that was like a slap, and he said no more.

At their own floor Miss Burke stood back for two other nurses to precede her and then dashed out herself as if she knew that she was going to be stopped.

"Miss Burke!" Sabra got in front of her somehow, flinging rules to the wind. "You've *got* to see Miss MacLaren now, Miss Burke. You can't let a lie injure Miss Borland too!"

"Lie?" Miss Burke tried to get past. "I haven't told any lies about her!"

"There is a worse lie than any telling, Miss Burke," Sabra said bluntly, refusing to let her by, "and that is the lie of keeping still."

"Oh, do shut up, will you?"

"You go up there! Now!"

"Mind your own business, will you?" But Miss Burke swung away from her and flounced up the stairs.

Her pulse pounding in her throat, Sabra went on to Men's Medical. Miss Borland was standing at the desk, staring down at the night report. Miss Gilbert was standing beside her, looking very stern. Janet Borland's face was somehow wistful, Sabra thought, and haggard at the same time. The probationer avoided the eyes of these two head nurses as she said, "Good morning, Miss Gilbert; good morning, Miss Borland," and stood aside for the others of the day shift to take their places for report.

Sabra looked down one side of the ward and up the other, coming at last to Mr. Landow's empty bed. She held her face in a sort of mask. The telephone rang. Miss Gilbert answered.

"Yes, Miss MacLaren." She hung up.

Two internes appeared in the doorway at the end of the ward, talking with someone whom Sabra could not see. A strange cap nurse came in swiftly, greeted Miss Gilbert, and took a place in the line above Sabra.

The report began. Miss Borland's voice was nervous, her words not clear. Miss Burke was not there.

"Speak more distinctly, please, Miss Borland," Miss Gilbert requested.

"I am sorry, Miss Gilbert." Miss Borland began again. The general summary of the night, the detailed items of the night, the report concerning each patient, the doctors' orders. Then she paused, looking separately at each person in the line, it seemed, before she continued, reading from the book:

"I am very sorry and ashamed that I must report that the patient, Mr. Landow in Bed 1, disappeared from the hospital between eleven-fifty and eleven fifty-five last night. He went out the fire-escape door. He has not been found, so far as I know. I do not know whether anyone helped him or not. I did not see him go. I was alone in the ward. The others were at supper. I discovered his empty bed at eleven fifty-five. He had asked for screens to stop the draft. Though there was no draft, of course, I thought it best to humor him. His disappearance was reported to Night Superintendent Miss Carter at eleven fifty-six.'" She stopped.

The day shift looked past Miss Borland and Miss Gilbert, at nothing in particular. They all knew that Mr. Landow's least request was customarily granted if it did not interfere with the rights or comfort of other patients.

"The night report is complete, Miss Gilbert."

"Thank you, Miss Borland." Miss Gilbert's voice was quiet, formal, impersonal.

Miss Borland's shoulders straightened, as if by an act of will. As she put down the report book, with its carefully ruled red lines to separate night and day, Miss Gilbert addressed her again.

"You will report to Miss MacLaren, Miss Borland, at seven-fifteen."

"Yes, Miss Gilbert."

The fingers of Sabra's left hand were pressing tightly against a folded small paper she held. Miss Borland had come slowly around the end of the line, obliged by the chart desk to walk quite close to Sabra.

"For you!" Sabra whispered, slipping her note into Miss Borland's cold hand.

The senior took the paper without a sign and went on down the ward—again that lifted head, that smooth stride, that clear smile for the patients' sake. Sabra shut her teeth to keep from crying. Be personal, you dope! She jeered at herself silently. Be personal now for the last time and add that to all the rest before they drop you!

The two internes in the doorway stood aside to let Miss Borland pass.

Miss Gilbert fingered the report book. "You have heard the report," she said finally. "This is a very difficult situation. It affects every nurse in the hospital. We must do our best, our level best, never to let such a report be necessary again. The matter

will be discussed thoroughly by those whose duty it is to discuss it. It will be wisest—and kindest, I think—if no one else talks of it at all. I hope each of you will agree with me.” Her eyes on each of them exacted a silent promise.

Then she assigned their duties and their schedules for the day, coming to Sabra last, as was customary. “This is your short day, Miss Dunning, but you will go off at eleven instead of ten-thirty.”

“Yes, Miss Gilbert.” Sabra had forgotten it was Saturday. She had known for three days Saturday would be her short day. Well, what did it matter? There would be linen to do, her last half hour in the hospital; that was something. She would not have to be so careful there.

“Now, trays! We’re late,” the head nurse said, relief at action creeping into her voice in spite of her.

The student nurses went down the ward and out along the narrow corridor toward the ward’s small serving kitchen, their aprons making an odd fluttering sound. Heads on pillows turned to watch them as they passed.

Before Sabra’s eyes in memory now was the hurriedly written note she had given Miss Borland—the note which she had written in her room this morning after an almost sleepless night. The note she had been forced to write, it seemed, and had been forced to give to her senior room-mate at report this unhappy morning. She could see every word of it, and this was what it said:

MISS BORLAND: *Miss MacLaren and Miss Gilbert both know why Mr. L. went. I've known for days, but I reported to them only yesterday. They both know you're not responsible. Everything will come out all right for you; I am sure it will. Please show this to Miss MacLaren. I want her to know I've told you first. I realize this is a personal matter, and I'm being unprofessional, but never again will I let my keeping still about anything bring harm to someone else—not even for the length of time it takes you to get from the ward to the office.*

SABRA G. DUNNING

There was a block of ice somewhere inside Sabra that morning. You could be cold as a stone, though you knew you had done what you had to do. Tomorrow was the last day of her probationary period. Most of the rest of her class would get their caps tomorrow. Two girls had already dropped out, having decided they did not like it. Miss Wilbur had said to those who remained, just the other day, "You have all done very good work."

But there was more than good work required of you, Sabra knew, as did they all. One or two girls had been ill and had a few days to make up, but in her own case that one infirmity day did not matter. She knew she would not be given a cap anyway. Not after yesterday, with its reprimand about being in the linen closet, its second reprimand about dropping that bedpan. And the soiled

apron which both Miss Gilbert and Miss MacLaren had seen. And her awful, piggyish confession of having known for weeks and not telling before why Mr. Landow was so frightened. Oh no. Not after last night and this morning and Miss Burke being so angry; not after last night, with Mr. Landow gone no one knew where, desperately ill as he was. Not after this morning, with all her room-mates watching her in silence while she wrote that too-late note with tears streaming down her face. *They* knew before she had known herself, she realized now, that Sabra Dunning would never wear a Randolph-Macey cap. That was why they had been so still.

Well, all right, she thought dully, achingly, as the day staff rounded the doorway into the kitchen. All right. I've done the best I could, and I—I still respect myself. I'll go out home when my short day begins and—and help to run the ranch until Galen's through with the army. As for nursing, Galen will have to teach me if we ever have a clinic.

In the hall the two internes were standing talking with a man in business clothes. They followed the nurses into the serving kitchen, going around behind the tray rack toward the windows which looked out into the court, passing in front of the steam tables, getting in the way.

"That first one out there?" the man in business clothes asked. He must be an insurance-company representative, Sabra thought.

"No, the one right beside the fire escape," one of the internes said. They were discussing the door used by Mr. Landow, Sabra was sure. The other interne turned away and stood watching the serving.

A junior nurse was putting cereal into the heavy bowls. Another was filling battered little brown metal pots with coffee from a huge granite pot which had been sent down on the dummy from the main kitchen because the urn was out of order. Miss Burke rushed in, her face red, her eyes angry, and worked at trays.

"Great life, hey, Burke?" the interne asked, smiling.

"Sure it's a great life! Stop making me spill things!"

"I wish they'd get out of the way," one of the other nurses said in an undertone.

The three men went out and stood by the door.

"You may take this tray, Miss Dunning. It's eleven's." Miss Burke pointed to a tray in the rack.

Sabra took it, glancing over it carefully as she went toward the door, as it was the rule to do. Then she stopped and, turning again, went over to a long diet list which was fastened with thumb tacks to the wall at the end of the steam table.

"What's the matter?" the senior nurse asked.

"There are two tablets here instead of one, Miss Carey. Is it the saccharine? I thought the order read at report was for one tablet. It is a new word to me; it somehow stayed in my mind."

"The saccharine? Yes, Miss Dunning, the order is for one tablet."

"There are two on the tray, Miss Carey."

"Miss Burke!" The senior nurse spoke sharply.

"Did you put the saccharine on eleven's tray?"

"Yes, I did," Miss Burke answered rudely.

"Did you read the order for that patient, Miss Burke?"

"Oh, it's one tablet, all right. But he likes things sweet. That little dab of saccharine can't hurt him."

"That is not for you to decide, Miss Burke. Will you please remove the extra tablet?" Before anything more could be said Miss Gilbert came in hurriedly.

"What's the matter out here? Not a tray in the ward yet!"

"We are ready to serve now, Miss Gilbert. Miss Dunning, you may take that tray in now," Miss Carey said. "Miss Burke, what did you do with the saccharine?"

"I've got it here." Miss Burke felt in her pocket for the tiny tablet.

"What on earth is that?" Miss Gilbert asked, looking at the fleck of white on Miss Burke's outstretched palm.

Miss Burke laughed. "It's a tempest that nearly got into a coffee cup, Miss Gilbert. A tiny half grain of saccharine. I tried to give poor old Flint two of them; he's so crazy for something sweet, but—the prob caught me at it."

"This ward has enough trouble on its hands right now, Miss Burke," Miss Gilbert said sharply, "without any deliberate mistakes. Haven't you learned that nurses do not modify orders? And I would hardly say that your record so far would justify you in taking the initiative in changing orders, for medicine or anything else."

"I thought it was only an imitation sweetening, Miss Gilbert. I didn't mean to cause trouble, I——"

"That will do, Miss Burke. Get on with your trays." Miss Gilbert went out.

"Oh, let her rave!" Miss Burke muttered. "She doesn't know I'm leaving this joint when I go off at ten-thirty. I told MacLaren just a minute ago that I can't swallow any more of it! Let her rave, I say—saccharine or sugar, what's it to me?" Miss Burke picked up a tray and started down the corridor. She met Sabra coming back. "I'll square things with you some day, Prob," she said in a hostile undertone. "You better mind your Ps and Qs!"

Sabra went on past without speaking. As she started to the ward again with another tray she was forced to draw back from a bus boy who came racing with an oilcloth-covered broad gurney. Miss Carey stepped quickly to the doorway.

"Slow down with that thing!" she ordered. "Where do you think you are?"

He pushed it on into the serving room, taking pains to brush against her with it.

"Pity you couldn't have got here before half the trays have been carried in by hand. Be careful! You'll knock something off that rack!"

"You cranky this morning?" he asked, showing a row of big teeth through an unpleasant smirk.

"Get out of here!"

"O-oh—when I geta ready!" He stood there a moment, eying her, before he went.

"Unpleasant little wretch!" Miss Carey said. She told Sabra to take the gurney into the ward. "Put your tray on it and use it to bring the empties out. You have to watch it; it swings sidewise on account of that bent wheel. It's been in the shop three days, and they've sent it back now without fixing that. We're awfully late. The doctors'll be here before we've got our beds made!"

Sabra served the last tray and began collecting the ones which were ready to go out, some of them quite empty of food, some almost untouched—facts to be carefully noted on her pad at each bed and later carefully charted. Then the trays were stripped and stacked, and the dishes were stacked, and the silver heaped on a rubber mat. In a few moments a dishwasher would arrive to put them all in order again.

Sabra went back to the ward. Screens were put up around alternate beds. Nurses came swiftly with arms full of fresh linen, with broad enameled trays holding big basins in which tall, fat pitchers stood, with soap dishes on the side. Bath trays. A

waste bucket always dangled from two fingers at one end.

An orderly came down the ward slapping a soiled towel against his thigh as he walked, ready to "finish" the baths as soon as the nurses were ready—the custom in all men's wards.

The telephone rang and was answered inaudibly. A faint film of steam gathered on the closed windows, and a smell of Ivory soap separated from the other smells in the ward.

Here and there a laugh, now and then a moan, a whining complaint.

The quiet voice of a nurse repeating an order.

A hiss of steam from a sterilizer. Hurried steps. A metallic click. A cloud of steam from the utility-room doorway. The sound of metal against metal.

The faint puffing slap of a nurse's hand on a pillow.

The tiny skidding sound of rollers as screens were folded. Slant rectangles of the screens being carried down the ward, the nurse's white shoes showing below, the wings of her cap above.

The fog outside, breaking up.

A smile here and there on some pale face on a pillow.

A dark head raised, to glance down the room, then flop wearily back.

Colorless hands lying on fresh counterpanes, listlessly.

Lips set tight in pain. Lips pursed in petulance. Lips relaxed in hopelessness, down-curving.

Eyes. Questioning, worried eyes. Pain-fraught eyes. Apprehensive eyes. Eyes a little frightened. Blurred eyes, with no clear look in them. Tired eyes, infinitely tired eyes. Once, maybe twice, the inquisitive eyes of a convalescent, speculative eyes following this nurse or that, slightly interested eyes with a curtain of illness behind them—once, maybe twice.

A group of medical students in the ward entry, seeming hushed and very serious. An assured older man talking to them.

The last screen moved. Two rows of heads turned toward the students. The cold slap of a metal chart cover on the table. The *wheep* of a chart being put into the file.

Swift footfall of the nurses below the apron's flutter.

The sudden brief roar of running water, thinned to a high-pitched, long-drawn note. The sound of empty metal being put into a metal rack.

The slap of the medical students' feet down the ward. Formal "good mornings," nurse to doctor.

A porter with a bucket on rollers and a huge wet mop. The clop of the mop on the brown linoleum. The smell of soap and water and wet linoleum. The changed tread of the nurses. Rubber heels, wet floors, danger.

The scrape and squeak and click of some bed's Fowler frame and the raised torso of a patient, breathing hard. The puff of pillows rearranged.

"Comfortable?"

"Sure." (A little wearily.)

The slipping, heavy sound of the bedside table being moved. "Can you reach it easily?"

"Sure." (A little wearily.)

"Do you want your paper?"

"Ummm." (A little wearily.) The sound of paper being unfolded. The sound of paper being laid out on a bed. A sigh.

A dummy laden with huge laundry baskets pushed in at the end of the ward, arrived in the morning because it is Saturday. The creaking thud of baskets on to the floor inside the linen-closet door. The smell of freshly ironed bed linen.

Small lights here and there at the heads of beds. Nurses moving quickly. Low-spoken requests. Slant rectangles of the screens being moved in place again. White rectangular sections blocked out of the ward here and there. Things covered with striped gray-and-white ticking being carried within the screens. The dulled-bell sound of moving window weights. The smell of fresh air mingled with tainted air.

Two brisk doctors.

Gay, bantering words to patients. Cheery hellos! Hellos from pillows, less bantering, less cheery, playing up.

A still-faced nurse at the bedside, holding an open chart. Yes, Doctor. No, Doctor. Thank you, Doctor.

* * *

As soon as she could Sabra made for the linen-closet door. There were mountains of folding to do. She was glad. It was possible, by this time, to fold linens automatically. You did not have to think. She was wholly unable to think. She folded and folded and folded. The square columns rose steadily higher, each beside the last, filling the shelves with horizontally fluted pillars.

Now and then a triangle of her white apron showed past the open door of the closet, or there was a glimpse of the movement of her arms and hands as she took another stack from the basket.

She went out of the ward finally, arms held high, keeping the great baskets off the floor. Her face was pale as she came back, deep eyed, glancing down the ward for lights. Good! There was one.

"So awful serious this morning!" the patient said to her.

"Oh!" She put on a smile. "My short day. I'm planning what to do. Serious business." She went out to change his hot-water bottle and came back a moment later, the smile still struggling to stay firm. She placed the water bottle and went to the linen closet for a towel for the treatment room.

A man in olive drab appeared in the entry of the ward. Sabra saw him and drew back into the closet. There was a gleam of light on his insignia, a gleam of light on his polished boots.

Miss Gilbert's smooth movement down the ward. Swift smiles of the other nurses down the ward. The officer's heels brought together quickly. The

formal, stiff salute. A bow. Galen Trent's grin above his words. "Just look at me, will you? Just look at me!"

"You're lovely, Doctor! You're absolutely lovely!"

A pirouette. "Back and front?"

"Back and front. The shoulders fit perfectly."

"And the waist and hips are slim?"

"Positively sylphlike."

"My deepest gratitude. How's everything?"

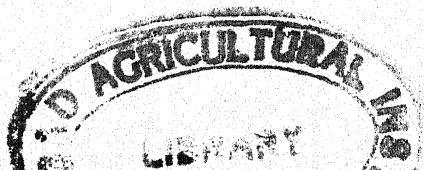
Abruptly sobered faces, remembering the report this morning.

"I know, Gilbert." Galen's voice gone gentle. Sabra stepped farther back into the closet; she couldn't bear to be impersonal now. She had to stay out of sight. "I know, Gilbert," Galen Trent was saying. "It's hell. But his trouble is over. They found him. A little while ago. He would only have lived to suffer and be returned to prison. Now he's at peace."

"How on earth?" Miss Gilbert asked, her voice distraught.

"He got a taxi just outside here, in the dark. Went to a friend's house. Got clothes. Then got another taxi to take him to a steamer lying at one of the piers. But the effort was too much for him. He died in the cab. The first driver reported what he knew when he heard the police broadcast on the radio a little while ago—news, I mean."

There was a choked sound within the linen



closet, and then the slow turning of the man in uniform, until he saw her and her tears.

Miss Gilbert's voice, explaining, not seeing quite all. "Our prob has just finished the linen."

A woman in white in the ward entry. Loitering looks brushed off the nurses' faces. Miss Gilbert's quick move of greeting. "Good morning, Miss MacLaren." A nurse at the chart desk, rising.

The superintendent of nurses going down the ward, Miss Gilbert beside her. The officer on the other side. "You're a stunning soldier, Doctor Trent!" with a friendly smile. And his quick reply, "Don't you make fun of me, my first day!" The patients slowly recognizing him, one of them calling out:

"Hey, Doctor! So you're in the army now?"

"In the army now!" He paused, smiling, patting his uniform with a small boy's gesture. "Like it?"

The probationer standing at the linen-closet door saw sunlight suddenly flood the ward, break through the fog. Sunlight on the white counterpanes. Sunlight flickering on the water pitchers and the glasses. Sunlight splashing fans of gold on the brown linoleum. She saw Miss Gilbert and Miss MacLaren standing at the desk, the tall officer beside them.

After a moment the officer came back down the ward and filled the linen-closet doorway, both electric light and sunlight flashing on his insignia, flashing on the russet of his boots. He almost went inside the linen closet, but he didn't quite dare.

"You like it?" he demanded.

"I—I love it! Go away!"

"Okay. But I'm a so'jer now—I can do as I please. I'll be seeing you topside. When're you off?"

Sabra looked at her watch. "'Leven."

"I'll wait. Outer desk." He went out of the ward, not ten feet ahead of Miss MacLaren, whom Miss Gilbert had accompanied to the entry.

Miss Gilbert returned, her face a mask, and stopped to scan the stacked linen critically, seeming to avoid the probationer's eyes. "This is finished, I see," she said crisply. "Miss Dunning, please report to Miss MacLaren at once."

"Yes, Miss Gilbert."

Sabra waited for the head nurse to step back, and, closing the linen-closet door noiselessly, she somehow got herself through the entry and directed her steps to Macey First, using the stairway. Her feet went of their own accord. She gave them no thought whatever. She could not think. All she could do was be cold, shiveringly, icily, miserably cold.

It had to come. She had known it would come. Here it was. The end. With Galen so proud in his uniform. Galen, ready for his work at Base Hospital. Galen, waiting "topside" for her to come out from Miss MacLaren's office and tell him she was dropped. He must have known too. That was why he went so easily. That was why he was so brief. He knew she would not be able to keep steady.

It was bitter that her very last act had been a

violation of rules, for of course Miss MacLaren had seen. But nothing mattered now. Sabra tapped on the office door. Miss Ellis opened it and told her to come in and went off through an inner door after asking her to wait. Miss MacLaren was not there.

Sabra stood motionless, her hands at her sides, her head up, her eyes unseeing, her mouth set.

She waited. She had to relax. She looked about. She saw her note to Miss Borland, lying spread open on Miss MacLaren's desk. She stared at it.

There was a nurse's cap on a hook on the wall behind the desk. A cap with two white pins in it, the crinkled, blunt 'bobby pins' that were used to hold the cap in place. A cap with no nurse under it—just a hook. Suddenly she knew. It was Miss Borland's cap! The gravest penalty in all the training school was to have your cap taken away. So Miss Borland had been made to pay that price for Landow's escape, for Miss Burke's silent lie, for her own silence.

"O-oh-h," breathed Sabra Dunning, this ache too deep for tears. "I want to go! Why can't I just go? Why can't I just walk out of here? I'm going t——"

"Good morning, Miss Dunning." A hand on her arm, from behind. "Don't run away now."

"I—you—Miss MacLaren——"

Miss MacLaren only smiled. "It occurred to me," she said, "that since Doctor Trent is all dressed up today, you might like to dress up too."

So I am writing off your one day in the infirmary, and I am going to give you this now." She was still holding Sabra's arm, and they were both around behind the desk near that hook on the wall.

The superintendent of nurses took the cap off the hook and held it out, reaching across to Sabra's other hand. "There is a mirror on the wall there if you want to use it."

Sabra could not speak. She could only swallow and try to get her breath.

"They're quite easy to pin," Miss MacLaren said lightly, swinging around, her hands lifted to the back of her own cap. "See? This way. Put it on, Miss Dunning."

Sabra did as she was told, hardly seeing her face beneath the snowy linen, knowing it was there in the mirror, but still hardly seeing it.

"I thought," she breathed at last, "I thought there—I thought I——"

"You expected the whole class to be here? Yes, we do that, usually. But I wanted you to have yours first of all, and you see I couldn't quite explain to the others all of the reasons why." Miss MacLaren looked down at her desk, and her glance fell upon the open note.

"This took courage," she said quietly, lifting it. "I asked Miss Borland to let me have it for a while. I wanted to ask you what the G. stands for. You put only the initial on your application, too, I discovered. What is your other name, Miss Dunning?"

"It's Gordon, Miss MacLaren." Sabra found breath enough for that. "Sabra Gordon Dunning."

"Doctor Gordon Dunning was your father?" Miss MacLaren asked. And when Sabra nodded she said, "Why didn't you want to tell me? Doctor Dunning was on staff here when I was in training—when you were in rompers, I imagine. And you didn't tell me you were his daughter. Well, anyway I knew," she said surprisingly. "You slap your hair down just exactly as he always did—even if you had not resembled him so closely that anyone who knew him would have been sure. And I want to say that I, too, realized you must make good on your own, for he wouldn't have had it otherwise."

"But I can say with complete frankness now that you have done it. I want to congratulate you on the quality of your work these long three months and on the way you have conducted your personal affairs under the restrictions we were obliged to impose. You have met a difficult task with dignity and self-control."

Miss MacLaren's tone changed slightly as she went on. "You know," she said, as if she were speaking to an equal in rank, "I've always felt that when she has her cap a nurse is a little like one of those clipper ships that used to come into this harbor years ago. Those clippers had grace and poise and all the rigging and fittings they needed to sail a stormy sea, and a good strong man at the helm. I like to think of our nurses going into their duties

as those white-winged ships went into the wind—with everything under control.”

Miss MacLaren folded up the little note and gave it to her. “Miss Borland asked me to have you bring this home. You must both try not to dwell too much on that sad occurrence of last night. And now you still have a few minutes of duty time; you must report to your ward. Tomorrow you begin your work as a junior nurse, but you are a cap nurse today.”

“Thank you very much, Miss MacLaren.” Cap nurses must not stand around blinking back tears, no matter how moved they were. Sabra went swiftly out into the corridor.

At the elevator she met Bianca Laredo.

“Why, Sabra!” Bianca exclaimed, forgetting the last-name rule. “Congratulations! Isn’t it wonderful? I saw Doctor Trent out in the entry a minute ago. He’s in uniform! Where are you going? Isn’t this your short day?”

“I’m not off duty for fifteen minutes yet,” Sabra Dunning said, “and I’m going into the wind!”